

KASHMIR

HINDU SHRINES



HERITAGE AND HISTORY
C.L.GADOO

THE BOOK

Gandhi Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu

The book provides a comprehensive account of the history and heritage of the Hindu shrines and *tirthas* in Kashmir, the tradition and legend associated with them and the spiritual experience they symbolize. The book is the first complete study of the sociology of the Hindu religious culture of Kashmir and provides a description of the ancient Hindu temples, mostly lying in ruins, shrines and *tirthas* and the places of pilgrimage, the cave temples, temples built in and around springs and temples in general, besides, shrines dedicated to the worship of *Bhavani*—the Mother Goddess. The book is based upon source materials drawn from Mahatamayas of the Hindu shrines, scriptural notices, legend and tradition. The English version of several *Mahatamayas* and legends and extracts of scriptural notices are included in the foot-notes and appendix of the book for ready reference.

Kashmir formed a part of the complex of cultures, which grew in the north of India from their Harappan beginnings. An attempt has been made to place the history of the Hindu *tirthas* in the broad context of the Hindu religious culture of India. The book is expected to provide the basis for evolving new approaches to the study of the Hindu religious precept and practice which underline a deeper insight into the Hindu religious culture.

KASHMIR

HINDU SHRINES

HERITAGE AND HISTORY

BY

C.L.GADOO

FOREWORD

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**Dedicated
to
the memory of my father**

Pandit Janki Nath Gadoo

**Books are infinite in number,
and time is short, therefore,
the secret of knowledge is to
take what is essential.
Take that and try to live up to it.”**

-----Swami Vivekananda

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN KASHMIR
1897-98**



STANDING (L to R) : 1. NARAYAN DAS (Father of Swami Lakshman Joo) 4. ANAND KAUL BAMZAI (Historian and President Srinagar Municipality) 5. JUSTICE RISHIBAR MUKHERJEE (J&K High Court) 10. PESTON JI (Well Known Businessman)

SEATED (L to R) : SWAMI SADANANDA, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA SWAMI NIRANJANANANDA, SWAMI DHIRANANDA

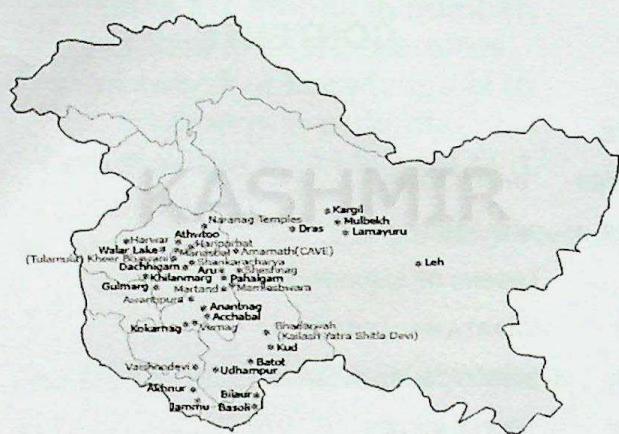
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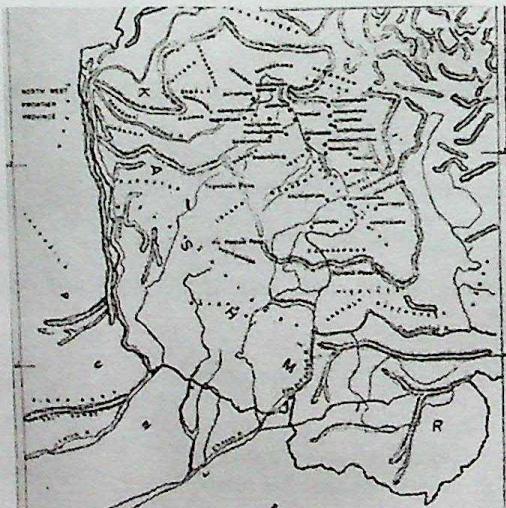
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FRONT COVER ----RUINS OF WANGAT TEMPLES
BACK COVER---- RUINS OF NARAN NAG TEMPLES



HINDU SHRINES OF KASHMIR



ANCIENT HINDU SHRINES OF KASHMIR

PREFACE

The study of history and heritage of the Hindu temples in Kashmir, has been undertaken to provide the reader and the scholar in Hindu history of Kashmir, a comprehensive account of the sociology of the Hindu shrines and *Tirthas* in Kashmir; the tradition and legend associated with them and the spiritual experience they symbolize. An attempt has been made to trace the history of the Hindu religious culture of Kashmir in the broad context of the Sanskrit religious culture of the Hindu India. The history of Kashmir goes back to the beginning of the Vedic civilization of India. A systematic framework of study has been followed to trace the evolution of the Hindu religious culture of Kashmir, identify its basic beliefs and ritual structures and establish the continuity of its history.

The study is divided into six parts. The first part deals with sociology of the Hindu religion of Kashmir. The second part deals with the history and religious significance of the stone temples of Kashmir, nearly all of them in ruins now. The third part deals with cave temples and shrines which are scattered all over Kashmir. The fourth deals with the spring shrines, *Nags* and *Tirthas*. The fifth deals with the shrines dedicated to the Mother Goddess *Bhavani*, in her many forms. The sixth part deals with the destruction of the Hindu temples during the medieval period of the history of Kashmir, when the ancient Hindu kingdom came under Muslim rule. A description of the vandalisation the Hindu religious shrines faced after the commencement of terrorist violence in Kashmir has also been incorporated in the study.

The English versions of a number of *Mahatamayas*, have been appended to the study to provide the reader an insight into the spiritual significance of the various shrines. The English version of Abhinavgupta's *Bhairva Stotra*, Adi Shankaracharya's *Sarada Stotram*, Hymn to *Tripurasundri* and *Gauri Dashkam* are included in the study. It also provides the scholar ready reference for any further study in the subject.

I am indebted to Dr. M.K.Teng, an eminent scholar, who encouraged me to undertake the study and offered valuable guidance and help without which the work would not have reached its completion.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to the Archeological Survey of India, Samith Vision and Kashmir News Network, where from I acquired the photographs, which have been included in the study. I acknowledge my indebtedness to the editors of Koshur Samachar, Neelmatam, Naad, Sentinel, Martand, Vitasta, *aalav*, Milchar, Sunder Vani, Panchtarni, and Sheetal Nath, the valuable journals published by the Hindu community of Kashmir, now smouldering in exile for the data and information used in the book.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to the editorial board of Parmanand Research Institute's publications, editorial board of Swami Svamananda Ashram's publications, editorial board of Bhagavaan Gopinath ji Trust's publications, editorial board of Ishwar Ashram Trust's publications, editorial board of Sri Ramakrishna Math publications and HLF-KBC Sir Aurel Stein Heritage web site, project UK, for providing useful information.

I acknowledge my debt to Pandit M.L.Munshi and Dr. S. Kalyanaraman, renowned geologists, whose research papers I used for my study. I have drawn heavily on the research paper of Brigader Rattan Koul on Nilmat Purana. I am thankful to them.

I am thankful to Ashwini Gadoo and Ashwani Dhar for their valuable help in research and design of this study.

I am thankful to Aditi Koul, Deepanshi Dhar, and Anil Anand who have taken pains to go through the entire text and make my work easy. I am also indebted to my friends, relations and family members, who stood by me all through my long journey of more than four years and for the valuable help they offered me in the preparation of this work.

MAHA NAVMI
27th September, 2009.
DELHI

C.L.Gadoo

FOREWORD

The study of the history of Hindu temples in Kashmir undertaken by Chaman Lal Gadoo is a pioneering attempt to rediscover the Sanskrit content of the Hindu culture of Kashmir. The study brings to surface the fundamental unity of the Sanskrit civilization of India, the continuity of its history and the geography of its frontiers. Gadoo notes; "There is a resonance which runs through the historicity of temples in Kashmir, the *Mahatmays* and the scriptural constructs of the divinity of the Hindu temples in India. The study of the Hindu temples and *Tirthas* in Kashmir is therefore, an essential aspect of the study of the Hindu civilization of India." Temples are at the centre of the Sanskrit religious culture of India and symbolize the unity of the basic belief systems and ritual structures which underline the theological precepts of Hinduism. Gadoo notes; "The essence of worship in the Hindu religion is the expression of the faith in the unity of the spiritual with the human, it is the expression of devotion and symbolizes the will of the soul to merge with the universal--the absolute, of which the human form is a part and a manifestation. The temples are a sacred place for every Hindu; they symbolize the permanence of life and its total unity which supercede death and dispersal."

The Hindu religion, precept and practice, belief systems and ritual structures are basically Sanskrit in content and natively Indian. The Hindu temples rightly claimed by Chaman Lal Gadoo to be the,"abodes of God, where the Hindus worship the universal,"and "seek to experience the presence of the absolute reality at a natively simpler level of consciousness,"represent the Sanskrit vision of God. The vast and varied forms of worship of the Hindu deities--the iconic expressions of the *Parmatman* are a part of the spiritual culture of the Sanskrit India. The Sanskrit India evolved over millinia from its formative beginnings in the Vedic age, unfolding into the period of the Upanishads and the era of the Puranas. In the process it encompassed ever-expanding geographic boundaries and spread across the north of India far into the north-west, beyond the Caucasus. The Sanskrit religious culture grew into an incredibly intricate complex of philosophical doctrines, theories of action, modes of worship and a stunning variety of temples and *Tirthas*--the place of pilgrimage.

The Vedic civilization of the legendary river Saraswati flourished in the close vicinity of Kashmir. There is little doubt left now about

the historicity of the Saraswat people. Geological evidence has come to surface which establishes beyond doubt that the river Saraswati flowed down from the Himalayas in a north-westernly course, to Rann of Kutch. Archaeological excavation along the course of the ancient river has revealed sterling facts about the civilizational linkages between the Harappan and the Saraswat people. David Frawley, a leading US Indologist has reported, that a Committee of geologists, historians, geographers and other experts appointed by Government of India, under the chairmanship of Dr. V.S.Watankar, conducted a survey of 150 archaeological sites, over a stretch of 3500 kilometers along the course of the river Saraswati. They used latest techniques such as Multi-Spectral Scanner (MSS) and land sat imagery. The Committee concluded that the river Saraswati dried up gradually between 1800 BC and 800 BC due to tectonic movements which caused change in the course of river Satluj. The Committee discredited the theory of Aryan invasion of India and rejected the sociological divide between the pre-Aryan India and the Vedic India of the Aryan origin. It refused to recognize that the Harappan and Mohenjodara cultures represent the pre-Aryan, Indus Valley Civilization. The Committee concluded that the discovery of the dried channel of the river Saraswati, east of river Indus and the location of more than 260 archaeological sites which showed civilizational similarities to Harappan and Mohenjodara cultures provided evidence of the historical continuity of the Sind Valley Civilization and the early Vedic civilization of India.

Evidence is also available of the close contact between the people of the Saraswati civilization and people of Kashmir. Nilmat era of the Hindu history of Kashmir followed the disappearance of the river Saraswati. Nilmat Purana narrates; "sixty five rituals and festivals, were celebrated with great devotion, faith, pomp and show. Some of the rituals and festivals find mention in other Puranas also. Some of these are celebrated even today in Kashmir, like Kaw Poonim and Yaksha Mavas (*Kechi Mavas*). It is generally thought that the Purana talks of rituals and festivals of Nagas only, and these being adopted by Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir, which is not so. Many of the rituals, festivals and days are common with those followed by Aryans in Bharatvarsha or emanating from Vedas."

Chaman Lal Gadoo unveils the historical context in which he places the Hindu temples of Kashmir. His emphasis on the fundamental unity of the Sanskrit culture of India and the Hindu religious culture of Kashmir is persuasive. Gadoo brings to surface

the *Advaitic* sub-stratum of both *Shakht* and *Shiva-Darshan*, two basal aspects of the religious culture of Kashmir. He observes," *Nilmata Purana*, the *Mahatmayas*, social and cultural data about the history of Kashmir made available in the *Rajatarangni* of Kalhan and *Jonraja*, the *Agmas* and the scriptural literature of the Hindus of Kashmir, including *Langakhsh Karmkanda* represent a philosophy which is essentially Sanskrit in content. The Hindu temple worship in Kashmir evolved as an integral aspect of the temple worship in India.

PROTO—ARYANS

The statement that "the history of Kashmir begins with the history of the Vedic civilization of India", with which Chaman Lal Gadoo begins his study of the sociology of temple worship in Kashmir, underlines a serious effort to devise a new approach to the study of the Hindu religious culture which has its frames of reference in the Hindu civilization and the continuity of its history. Perhaps Gadoo suggests the necessity of the adoption of a methodology which views the evolution of the Sanskrit civilization as an integrated process in contrast to the methodologies followed by the English historians of the British Empire in India and their European contemporaries who identified the race movement believed to have occurred in India, with the growth of a constellation of cultures, independent of each other and fenced securely in their exclusiveness. The British and the European historians believed that the Vedic civilization had its origin in Aryan migration into India and the elemental conflict between white skinned Aryans and black skinned indigenous people of India, the Krishana Yoni Dasyus.

The Aryan invasion of India is based upon the belief that Indians were composed of an administre of ;(a) "long headed, narrow nosed, slender Mediterranean type people, found all over the ancient Middle East and Egypt;" (b) the pro-Austroloid people with a flat nose and thick lips related to the Australian aborigines, typically represented by the bronze figurine of the Dancing Girl of Sind Valley Civilization and (c) the later racial type represented by the "bearded statite of the Sind Valley."

The Aryan invaders are believed to have swept down through Baluchistan into Harppan settlements, devastating them completely. Describing the Aryan invasion, the British historian A.L.Basham wrote; "These tribes of marauders, no doubt, were the uncultured barbarians, when compared to the Indus society, but were speedy and sweeping horsemen with the weapons of distant

targeting like the bow and the arrow, and means of stormy mobility and distant attacking rendered them victorious in disarranging the settled cultural society of Indus people."Basham wrote further;"The Harappan people were replaced by squatters, living in small huts with fire-places, an innovation, which suggests that they came from a colder climate." After having arrived in India the Aryan invaders settled in the Indo-Gangetic plains grew into the Vedic civilization---reducing the people of the Harappan India into the population of the Dasyus.

The race movements in Kashmir are believed to have followed the same course that they did in India. Kashmir, it is believed was populated by indigenous people, the Nagas, who were later joined by Pisachas. The Aryans are believed to have arrived in Kashmir sometime towards the end of the second millennium BC. One version of race-movements reads;"Thus the settlement of Naga's in Kashmir started during the Neolithic period (2600±200 BC), peaked around the beginning of the Megalithic period (1600±200 BC); for nearly thousand years.This period saw Daityas and Pisachas also settling down in the valley, though in different directions and away from the Naga settlements. The Aryan settlements again like Naga settlements started around 1600±200 BC and peaked around 1300 BC." Another version of race-movements in Kashmir, based upon the dispersal of the, "long headed, narrow nosed slender Mediterranean people" of the Harappan settlements due to Aryan invasion and their migration into Kashmir reads;"It is obvious from the skeleton finds at Burzahom that a chunk of Harappan men ventured to find their shelter in the safer confines of remote north with the pit dwellers and imparted their advanced knowledge for the horizontal-settlements"

During the last several decades evidence has come to surface, which does not corroborate with the methodologies that underline the identification of the early history of Hindu India with the race movements. Serious doubts have been cast on the validity of the whole methodological framework of the Aryan migration into India and the evolution of the Hindu India into a constellation of racial cultures, in perpetual conflict with each other. Questions have been raised about the racial conflict between the Aryans and the Dasyus, which is believed to have determined the course of the evolution of the Sanskrit civilization of India. Historical fact and data have been unravelled, which necessitate a fresh mapping of the race movements in India on a more scientific basis.

The archeological explorations carried on by the Archeological Survey of India and survey studies conducted by their expert bodies in Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana have led the discovery new facts about the ethnic composition of the cultures that flourished in north India in ancient times and their historical continuity. The excavations carried on by the Archeological Survey of India over a number of neolithic sites in Kashmir, have unravelled facts which establish the ethnic affinity of the Neolithic--later stone-age people, whose skeletons were found at Burzahom in Kashmir, the people of the Harappan culture and the people who lived along the banks of the legendary river Saraswati, before the emergence of the Vedic age.

Burzahom is situated on the fringes of the Srinagar city in Kashmir. Archeological excavations carried on there by the Archeological Survey of India have revealed Neolithic, later stone-age settlements, dating back to the last quarter of the third millennium BC. The excavations at Burzahom have revealed a three-fold cultural sequence, starting from the Neolithic---the later stone age level and succeeded by the Megalithic and the early historic cultural levels. The Neolithic people of Burzahom lived in dwelling pits over which thatched roofs were erected. Stone tools, bone tools and pottery, including hand made pottery were unearthed at the site, besides human skeletons found in burial places under the pits. Detailed anthropometric examination of the skeletal remains of Burzahom have revealed that the skeletons possessed morphological features, which placed them in the people of the dolicocephalic, proto-Aryan ethnic stock, whose descendants are now living in the Punjab and Haryana, the Punjab Hill states of the Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The findings of the Anthropological Survey of India in respect of the ethnic composition of the people who lived in Burzahom, have brought to surface important facts about the ethnic origin of the people who lived in the north of India and the evolution of their social and religious culture. The findings of the Anthropological Survey of India about the ethnic continuity in the people of Burzahom and the Harappan people, have proved to be more significant. The morphological traits of the Burzahom skeletons have established the proto-Aryan composition of the Burzahom people as well as the proto-Aryan origin of the people who are now living in the Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The Nagas and Pisachas, claimed to be the indigenous people, who are believed to have lived in Kashmir before the

Aryans, arrived there, were also proto-Aryan people, differentiated into cultural groups. The Nilmata Purana enumerates a "mix of rituals those of Nagas, ones brought by Aryans and some even from the ones followed by Dasyus (original inhabitants of Bharatavarsha, as they are referred in Vedas)." The Burzahom people formed the central feature of proto-Aryan cultural continuum of north India, of which the early Vedic people living along the Saraswati river formed an inseparable part.

FRAME OF REFERENCE

The historians of the British empire in India, both the English as well as the Europeans, viewed inquiry into the past of India, as a quest for the discovery of India. They believed that the discovery of India was a part of the white man's legacy. The methodological constructs, and the tools and techniques, they used to explore the past of India were confined to their knowledge of the history of the Semitic civilization and the evolution of the pagan belief and religious ritual.

The methodological models used by the British and European historians of India were mainly reductionist in content and suffered from serious limitations. The assertion that "the institution of hunting, food gathering, harnessing domestication of herds and animals was led by male leader who was accordingly titled the *Pashupati*--the keeper and owner of the herds" underlined a reductionist paradigm, which hid more of the Hindu India than revealed. Sir Jhon Marshall described the statuette on the seal found in Mohenjodaro as the "proto-Shiva"; and claimed that "the horned god has much in common with Shiva of later Hinduism, who is in his most important aspect, a fertility deity and is known as *Pashupati*." Another celebrated English historian A.L.Basham, added that "the horns of proto-Shiva are evidently those of a buffalo." Neither Jhon Marshall nor Basham perhaps, knew that the cap-like headgear, depicted on the Mohenjodaro seal, was used by in the cooler regions of the northern India and it is still worn by the people in Ladakh and Kargil, in Jammu and Kashmir. A similar cap-like headgear is preserved at the shrine of Jeevan Sahib in Ladov in Kashmir, among the relics of the great Hindu saint. Basham's comment on the historic origin of the Mother Goddess, *Bhavani*, of the Hindu scriptures was equally deceptive. He wrote; "The religion was of the type practiced by other early agricultural communities in the Mediterranean region and the Middle East, centering round fertility rites and the worship of the Mother Goddess." Basham added; "They also made rough terracotta

statuettes of women, usually naked, but with elaborate head dresses. These are certainly the icons of the Mother Goddess, and are so numerous that they seem to have been kept in every home."

The Marshall-Basham framework continued to determine the course of research and investigation in the history of Hindu religious culture for a long time. Few attempts were ever made to look beyond the methodological paradigms evolved by the British and the European historians. A recent assessment of the Sind Valley Civilization, based upon Marshall-Basham framework, read; "So by 3000 BC the Indus society had settled itself as a peaceful and non-combative prosperous trading and commercial society, with its cultural belief in productivity, identifying it to the human female fertility and reproduction represented by Mother Goddess."

The inference that a non-combative peaceful and prosperous trading and commercial society, "identified its cultural belief in productivity" with "human fertility and reproduction represented by Mother Goddess" is inconceivable except in the context of the Semitic experience and its pagan past. Conceptualisation of the *Bhavani*—the Mother, in Indian context is fundamentally a proto-Aryan expression, not in any way related to the Semitic deities of the Mediterranean origin. The pagan deities of fertility were conceptually different identities, than the identity of *Bhavani*, who symbolized the continuity of life.

The Hindu concept of the divine Mother— half the part of the Shiva, the core reality of the universal existence, the *Brahmand*,— is symbolic of the elemental energy—the *Shakti*. *Bhavani* gives to time, its continuity—she is the essence of immortality, of which the secret is the Shiva. *Bhavani* evolved as the embodiment of spirituality in Hinduism. Temples dedicated to the worship of *Bhavani*, are the abode of *Parmatman*, who represents the guiding force of the *Brahmand* where *Bhavani* is the manifestation of the regulation itself.

The Hindu belief system does not have a pagan past. There is no elemental divide in the Sanskrit civilization of India which separates it from its pagan past. The Hindu religious culture has a continuity in history. Understandably, race movements in India and their relevance to the history of India came to be closely linked to the interest, the science of Anthropology and cultural sociology, evoked among the historians of the twentieth century. But the

insistence upon the strategic linkages between the Semitic religious forms of the Mediterranean social cultures with the evolution of the Indian religious and social cultures, did not have any empirical basis or historical justification. The social context and the material culture as also the spiritual experience of the Sanskrit people were different from the social context, material culture and the spiritual experience of the Semitic society. The spiritual expressions of the Semitic society were essentially societarian, whereas, the internationalization of the spiritual expressions was central to the Hindu society. That profoundly explains the reasons because of which the Semitic religious experience was bound to the value patterns of the Semitic world and the Hindu religious experience was insulated from all value-relativism.

The study undertaken by C.L.Gadoo, is an attempt to examine the evolution of the Hindu religious culture in Kashmir, within the frames of reference which are essentially Sanskrit in content. He writes; "The iconic manifestations of the divine reality in the Hindu religion or more specifically the Sanskrit religious culture has a content which is drawn from the geographical boundaries of the Hindu India and represent the intellectual experience of its generations. The Hindu temples and the practice of worship in them must be differentiated from what the idol worship is considered to be as a Semitic tradition of pagan origin."

Gadoo attempts to identify the pristine unity in the Sanskrit religious forms, needs to be pursued further by more, indepth research. Gadoo writes; "The worship of the Mother, in the form of *Bhavani*, which underlines the *Shakhta*, the basic ground-work of the Hindu worship, is definitely the most ancient form of worship in Kashmir. Shakht is an integral part of the Sanskrit civilization of India and broad structure of temple worship which evolved through Indian history." The approach, Gadoo has delineated, views the Hindu religious outlook as an unbroken continuity in time, the most characteristic feature of the Hindu civilization of India. Gadoo's observations have a methodological significance for the Hindu civilization of India. He notes;"The temples are a sacred place for every Hindu; they symbolize the permanence of life and its total unity, which supercedes death and dispersal. The Hindu temples have represented the human struggle to seek life in death, permanence in an impermanent ever-changing world and a bridge across time."

Gadoo's study is a part of the effort to delink the history of the Hindu Kashmir from the racial trappings of the history of Sanskrit

India. His attempt is to re-describe the geographical contours of the Hindu Kashmir and the history of its religious culture on the basis of its Sanskrit identity. Gadoo adds emphasis to his assertion that Kashmir was a part of the Sanskrit India. Kashmir was placed close to the people living along the banks of the river Saraswati. Both the Saraswat people and the people of Kashmir lived in the vicinity of the Harappan civilization. Excavations carried on by the Archeological Survey of India in 2003-2006, at Bhirrana, a Harappan site in Fatehabad, Haryana, have led to the discovery of "under-ground dwelling pits, house-complex on streets, a fortification wall, bichrome pottery, terracotta cups, arrow-heads, fish boots and bangles all in copper, incised copper celts, terracotta toy carts and animal figurines and beads of semi-precious stones." The early Burzahom people lived in dwelling pits. A rare discovery made at Bhirrana, was that of a red potsherd with an engraving of a dancing girl, resembling the 'Dancing Girl', found at Mohenjodero. Bhirrana finds established the unbroken cultural sequence from the, "Hakra-ware culture into early Harappan, early Mature Harappan culture." The excavations carried on by Archeological Survey of India at Manda, in Jammu on the banks of river Chenab have brought to surface the evidence of Harappan culture, thus extending the geographical boundaries of the Harappan people, close to the fringes of Kashmir.

There is evidence to establish that the beginning of the Nilmat era of the history of Kashmir, followed the introduction of metal tools into Kashmir from its Harappan surroundings. Nilmat era can be identified as the period through which the sub-structure of the Hindu religious culture of Kashmir evolved and the proto-Aryan ritual structures of Burzahom people and the Vedic ritual structures, embodied in the Vedic Kalpa Sutras and the Grah Sutras, were integrated into the Karmkanda, for the Hindus of Kashmir by Muni Laugakhsha.

MAHATAMAYAS

The *Mahatamaya* provide an account of the legend, tradition, mythology and spiritual experience of the generations of the Hindus of Kashmir. *Mahatamayas* were composed all over the centuries from the end of the Nilmat era to the close of the Muslim rule over Kashmir, in the early nineteenth century. The Nilmat Purana is the oldest *Mahatamaya*, which was composed sometime towards the close of sixth century AD. "The numerous *Mahatmayas* of Kashmir are interesting sources of early historical geography and describe the topography of the valley, information regarding the ancient nomenclature and various other facts of

Kashmir. Among the 52 *Mahatamayas*, the *Vitasta Mahatamaya* (Nilmat Puranum) is the longest one divided into 35 *Patalas*, *Mahatmayas* set forth the different legends connected with various places of pilgrimage, the merit to be acquired by their visits and the rites to be performed in each of the sites."

The *Mahatamayas* are an eloquent testimony of basic unity that permeates the religious culture of the Hindus of Kashmir and the Sanskrit culture of the Hindu India. They reveal;

- (a) the proto-Aryan foundation of the Hindu religious culture of the Hindus of Kashmir;
- (b) the Vedic and the Puranic philosophical content of Hindu belief systems in Kashmir ; and
- (c) the Vedic sub-stratum of the ritual culture of the Hindus of Kashmir.

The *Sarada Mahatamaya*, the *Mahatamaya* of the Sarada Devi shrine, now in the territories of Pakistan occupied Kashmir, narrates the legend of the origin of the *Sarada Tirtha* and describes the various stages of the *Yatra* to the Sarada Devi temple. The legend begins with the ascetic-Muni Shandlya, who practiced austerities to have a *Darshan* of the Goddess Sarada, the embodiment of Goddess Shakti in all her three manifestations. Shandlya was an ascetic of the Vedic order, who performed austerity in the tradition of Upnishads and sought the spiritual experience of the Mother Goddess Shakti, in all her manifestations of the Puranic spiritual experience.

Rajni Pradurbhava Mahatamaya, the *Mahatamaya* of the *Bhavani* shrine of Tulamula, recounts how, the Goddess Maharajini took her abode in Tulamula, in Kashmir. *Amreshvara Mahatamaya*, narrates the spiritual significance and origin of the Amarnath shrine. The *Mahatamaya* recounts a number of legends.

The *Koti-Tirtha Mahatamaya* recounts;"Listen about the place where all the sacred places of pilgrimage and Gods met together in one place. That holy place is designated as *Koti-Tirtha*. Those who desire release from rebirth, take a holy dip, offer prayers, sit in meditation and perform sacrifice there. Be so that the new moonday falls on Monday or even on a Sunday, when moon is visible and on the twelfth day when Sun transits from one constellation to another, that happens to be the the twelfth day of the fortnight, the bathing in the holy place is supposed to yield unperishable reward. Those holy places which exist in three worlds are all found in Kashmir range."

Describing the auspiciousness of the *Koti-Tirtha*, the *Koti-Tirtha Mahatamaya* narrates, "Where the Traya (three Streams of Vedas)--the confluence of Rig, Sam and Yajur mixed with the three brilliant lights originated there in *Koti-Thirtha*, that became a river, it surely burns Trimal (the three filth), also three qualities of human nature i.e, the Satva, the Rajas and the Tamas. There should be no doubt in it. In *Koti-Tirtha* where, there is the auspicious river Godavari, the pious and great Kedar, the magnanimous region of Vishnupad, and also the Pushkar region, all the pious places, belonging to all the three worlds united with Vitasta, the greatest of the great sins destroyed by drinking water and having taken bath there". Vishnupad and Pushkar are situated in Baramulla in Kashmir, where the *KotiTirtha* is situated.

Harmukt Ganga Mahatamaya is more revealing and establishes beyond doubt, that the process of cultural integration in India was pervaded by a continuity, which actually gave the Hinduism a permanence because of which it survived the Muslim invasion of India and its aftermath. Harmukat Ganga is known as Gangabal among the Hindus of Kashmir and is one of the most sacred of their *Tirthas*. Gangabal is a lake situated in the high mountains of the Harmukh range of the Himalayas in the north Kashmir, in which the Hindus immerse the ashes of their dead. The *Harmukat Ganga Mahatamaya* recounts; "O Devi! I will tell you about the pilgrimage of Uttara Ganga, by even hearing which O Maheshwari! One attains the merits of the journey of Ganga."

The most interesting aspect of the *Mahatamayas* is that they represent the quest of the Hindus of Kashmir to recreate a universe of spiritual experience, which is Sanskrit in outlook and composition. The *Mahatamaya* reveal a continuity of the Harappan, Burzahom and Saraswat cultures. This is an indicator that Nilmat, while keeping the Nagas in view has (mentioned) specific rituals connected with the Gods and Goddesses, who manifested specifically in Bharatvarsha and Aryas.

The *Mahatamayas* represent the quest of the Hindus of Kashmir to recreate a universe of spiritual experience which is Sanskrit in content. A reference to Nilmat Purana states; "Nilmat while keeping the Nagas in view has (mentioned) specific rituals connected with the Gods and Goddesses, who manifested specially in Bharatvarsha and Aryas. A specific mention of equating king Nila with Indra, clearly connects it to Vedic Gods and Godesses, where in Indra holds the prime position. Vedas talk

about rivers, which have been imported into Nilmata, like Ganga, Yamuna etc. Similarly, Gotra heads like Vasishta, Pulasiya, Agasta etc. have been mentioned, who have been associated with the Gotras of the Aryans, when they started along the Saraswati bank Ashrams. Places like Mathura, Prayaga etc. have been mentioned, which strengthens the argument of Nilmata having Aryan and Dasayu's connection."

MILLION HYMNS

The Hindu worship enshrines a process in which the human form is lifted by its inner soul to merge with the absolute. In their temples the Hindus worship the divine as it unfolds before them. The Sanskrit religious culture, "recognizes the essential unity between the universal and the existential." In Bhairava Stotra, Abhinavagupta says; "Having become one with thee, I adore you in the heart of my hearts. You are the first cause, the projection, sustenance and dissolution of the universe and the protector of the destitute. Everything patient and insatiate is pervaded by you; you are one with the self, one and only one without the beginning and the end." The communion of the *Atman* and *Parmatman* fills the Hindu temples with its effulgence and voice of a million hymns. The whole architecture of the Hindu temples is that of the abode of the *Parmatman*. Inside the temples the devotees partake the spirit of the divine. Rising above themselves and reposed in the lap of the Mother, they merge in the music of celestial song; "*Gouri(m) Amba (m) Amburu Hakshi (m) Ahmide.*" For ages, on the banks of Vitasta and Ganga, Krishna, Kaviri and Brahmaputra, the Hindu temples have resounded with the voice of a million hymns amidst the din of conches and bells.

The civilisational unity of the Hindus in India is symbolised by its collective consciousness of their spiritual heritage. Kashmir has for centuries been a part of the civilisational unity of the Hindus in India. The remains of the ancient temples in stone, are a mute testimony to the continuity of the history of the Hindus in Kashmir. Centuries of oppression and persecution have left their mark on the Hindu heritage of Kashmir. The Somyar temple, situated on the banks of Vitasta at Habakadal in Srinagar, is no longer thronged by the Hindu devotees, who are languishing in exile, hundreds of miles away. Somyar stands desolate in silence. The voice of a million hymns that filled its portals is also sunk in silence.

M.K. Teng

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The history of Kashmir begins with the history of the Vedic civilization of India. The people of Kashmir are a part of the proto-Vedic people of India, who have inhabited Kashmir from the most ancient times, going back to the latter stone-age culture of the Indian people who lived in the whole of the north of India.

The concept of the Hindu temples must be recognized to have grown from the basic spiritual, mythological and the ritual tradition of the Vedic India. These beliefs also took roots in Kashmir. The Hindu temples and religious places are not prayer houses. The Hindu temples and shrines are the abodes of God, where the Hindus worship the universal, seek to experience the presence of the absolute reality at a natively simpler level of consciousness; adore the omnipotent and significantly, seek communion with the inner soul. The whole conceptual framework of the Hindu temples has been a process in time, which has fundamentally revolved round the basic belief system of the Vedic civilization and its ritual structures. The spiritual quest for the realization of God is original to the Sanskrit religious culture, which recognizes the essential unity between the universal and the existential.

The essence of worship in the Hindu religion is the expression of the faith in the unity of the spiritual with the human; it is the expression of devotion and symbolizes the will of the soul to merge with the universal, the absolute, of which the human form is a part and a manifestation. The Hindu temples have a sacred place in the Hindu religious culture. They symbolize the permanence of life and its total unity, which supercede death and dispersal. The Hindu temples have represented the human struggle to seek life in death, permanence in an impermanent, ever changing world and a bridge across time.

*“From untruth lead me to the truth,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality.”*
(Brhadaranyaka Upanishad)

The Hindu temples and shrines represent the human effort to conceptualize the absolute in the three dimensional forms, which are easily comprehensible, the divine effort to visualize the *Aakar* and the *Nir-Aakar*, as the aspects of the divine.

In Bhagwat Gita, Bhagwan Krishen reduces the universe to a four dimensional reality;--- the *Virata Swarup* — representing the nature of space as well as time, which Arjun is able to see with his eyes and is brought by the divine power of Krishna within his comprehension. Hinduism accepts conceptualization of the universe in forms, which Hindu iconography represents. Hindu mind reaches the outer most frontiers of the manifest reality of existence. Hindu mind visualizes Shiva in all his forms including his Shiva-Shakti form. Hindus visualize the universe in the form of *Bhavani*-- pure energy-- and besides that in all her manifestations .The Hindu temples and shrines are the divine abodes of the *Parmataman* and assume the form, the Hindus can recreate by the spiritual power of their mind.

Clearly, therefore, *Parmataman* sits in the temple, when the Hindus worship. There is no doubt about it, because the limitations of logic and consciousness are the expressions of the time-space relationship. The spiritual experience of man, according to the Hindu scriptures, evolves in time and expands with space. Hindu temples symbolize a continuity of time and space, besides the consciousness of the divine.

The Hindu temples and the Hindu idols, whose sacred abodes the temples are, represent manifestations of the absolute in both space and time.The Hindu temples represent the confluence where the human mind reaches the climax of its spiritual experience.What is however essentially important to be recognized is that the Hindus believe that they are a part of the absolute. The Hindu Gods are a manifestation of the absolute. Hindu temples are an expression of the absolute. Therefore, Hindu temples are not subject to any value-relativism. Bhagwat Gita notes that the concept of universal cannot be bound by value-relativism. Since the Hindu temples are abodes of God, they transcend all value-relativism. Hindu temples manifest the divinity of the universal and the infinite.

The iconic manifestation of the divine reality in the Hindu religion or more specifically the Sanskrit religious culture has a content, which is drawn from the geographical boundaries of the Hindu India and represents the intellectual expression of its generations. The Hindu temples and the practice of worship in them must be differentiated from what idol worship is considered to be as a Semitic tradition of pagan origin. Idol worship is a concept of the Semitic civilization and the social prohibition it has

been subject to in the later evolution of the Semitic civilization must be differentiated from temple worship in the Hindu religious culture. The two civilizations represent two different world views, two different streams of consciousness, two different theories of action, two different views of the real, the apparent and the relative and two different perspectives of space and time as well as two different universes of human experience. Temple worship is the essence of Hinduism.

According to Hindu scriptures, time is divided into four *yugas* namely; *Satya Yuga*, *Treta Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga*. It is noted in the Puranas that in *Satya Yuga*— age of perfect virtue, there were no temples, for the Gods appeared to the people and helped them directly. In the second *Yuga* namely *Treta Yuga*, virtue diminished in quality and effect, the Gods appeared in their normal forms to the virtuous and in the ionic forms to others. But there were no temples. The pious sages installed ionic forms in their own homes and worshipped them. In the third *Yuga*, *Dwapara*, when virtue and vice almost vied with each other with equal adoration, the sages installed iconic forms in remote jungles and built shrines over them for the benefit of the pious. In the final and the present stage, *Kali yuga*, when vice dominates over virtue, need for the temples was found for people to worship, since it is only in the presence of an ionic form that people could seek communion with *Parmatman* and invoke his blessings.

A South Indian scriptural text, *Panch Tantra Agma*, states that the divine reality has five aspects, each of which it manifest in a form and each of which has a spiritual role. The first aspect is its transcendental form, the *Para*, absolute being, which is beyond the realm of human faculties. The second aspect is of the Divine-Being, is his *Vyuha* form. The *Vyuha* form is assumed by the Divine-Being at the creation, the manifestation of the universe. The *Vyuha* aspect is the cosmological aspect of the reality. The third aspect of the Divine-Being assumes the form of *Avtara* the incarnation of Vishnu. The fourth aspect of the Divine-Being is its imminence in all beings, which assumes the *Atrayani* form. The fifth and final aspect of the Divine-Being takes the form of the image, the *Archa*, which is easily accessible to all devotees in the temples. The *Panchtantra Agma* states; that the saints and seers have glorified the *Archa* form of God in their hymns. The tradition of the *Panchtantra Agma* highlights the significance of the temples for the redemption of man. The incarnations of Lord Vishnu are compared to flash floods in the rivers after heavy rainfall. His images in the temples, the *Archa* form, are compared to fresh

water lakes. For a thirsty person, yearning for water, to quench his thirst—the spiritual seeker who desires liberation—it is the water of the lake, which is immediately useful.

The temples are the most important of the manifestation of the Divine-Being, from the perspective of the devotees, who seek to experience the divine. The abodes of God, in *Archa* form, according to the Hindu tradition take three forms; first, where the Divine-Being appeared in the *Archa* form out of his free will. Secondly, where he appeared for the adoration of his devotees and thirdly, where the temples were founded by seers.

Interestingly, most of the temples in Kashmir are assumed to be manifestation of the Divine - Being, purely out of his free will. This is clearly borne out by the *Mahatmayas*, which enshrine the legends of the temples. The *Mahatmayas* of the ancient temples of Kashmir, which are of great value to the study of the Hindu history of Kashmir, are yet to be subject to serious research and study. A compendium of *Mahatmayas* named *Bringesh Samhita* was composed by one Brahmin, saint, and scholar Bringesh Bhatta of south Kashmir, containing mythological, religious, spiritual, Tantric, and geographical background of the different *Tirthas* of Kashmir. Mysterious Amarnath shrine is a divine phenomenon of the manifestation of the Divine-Being, out of his own free will. The *Chakreshwari* of Hari-Parbat is also a manifestation of the free will of the Divine-Mother. The process is indeed eternal. It is experienced by the devotees themselves. *Bhavani*, assumed her abode at Tulamulla, and manifested in the form of *Raginiya* out of her free will. Cosmic fire is another form of the manifestation of the Mother Goddess, represented by *Jwala* in the *Jwala* temple at Khrew, situated to the south of Srinagar in Kashmir.

In their historical evolution, the ancient temples of Kashmir might have followed a course, which appears to be at variance, with the logical explanations of the scriptures and the tradition. But what is of paramount significance is that the temples of Kashmir, have a spiritual status, which reflects the fundamental truth embedded in Hindu scriptures and traditions. This is clearly brought out by the study of the *Mahatmayas*. The *Mahatmayas* are a historical version of the scriptural truth, legends and the fundamentals enshrined in tradition. There is a resonance which runs uiimmn through the historicity of the temples in Kashmir, the *Mahatmayas* and the scriptural constructs of the divinity of the Hindu temples in India. The study of the Hindu temples and *Tirthas* in Kashmir is, therefore, an essential aspect of the study of the

history of Hindu civilization of India. It also reveals the basic unity of Vedic civilization in Kashmir.

A study of the history of the temples in Kashmir and a scrutiny of the *Mahatmayas*, reveals two extremely important aspects of the ancient social organization of the Hindus of Kashmir. First, that the social organization in Kashmir did not follow the stratification of caste, which became a characteristic feature of the Hindu social organization in India. There is no evidence of any restrictions on temple entry on any particular section of the Hindu society in Kashmir, provided by the history of temples or history of Hindu period of Kashmir. Neither *Rajataragni*, nor the *Nilmata Purana*, an earlier account of the history of the Kashmir, provide any evidence of the caste stratification of Hindu society on the basis of *Varna*. Nor is any evidence provided by the legend and tradition of the ancient Hindu temples in Kashmir about the stratification of social division based upon caste. Even *Mahatmayas*, of ancient Kashmir, which are something unique, describing social geography and importance of *Tirthas* of Kashmir, do not refer to any caste gradation.

The Hindu community was battered by the iconoclast persecution of the Muslim rule, which spread over nearly five hundred years. The caste stratification in India hardened under the Muslim rule, probably because the Muslim rulers, found it helpful in maintaining their authority over a population, predominantly Hindu, by allowing it to freeze into a steel frame of caste imperatives, which kept the Indian society divided.

The second aspect of the Hindu social organization, which the history of the Hindu temples in Kashmir throws into bold belief is that the spread of Buddhism, during the reign of Ashoka, did not come in conflict with the sediments of the Shakht worship of the Mother Goddess, Sharika, the basal foundations over which the Vaishnavite as well as Shiavite Hinduism in Kashmir grew.

Shakht, Vaishnavite and Shiavite Hinduism, propagated an inward looking philosophy of religion, which could not be bound with a structure of theological imperatives. This core belief in the purification of self, for the libration of soul, from the bondage of the life, left no room for conflict with Buddhism.

Buddhism, when it reached Kashmir was still oscillating between its nihilist moorings and the recognition of the *Bodhistava*

as the central reality of existence. The Hindus of Kashmir, moulded it in its *Sarvastavadvhin* form and not only related it to *Bodhisatava* and its reincarnation, but placed the Mother Goddess by the side of the *Bodhisatava*. Hindus of Kashmir spread Buddhism in Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia and Western China, and placed the White Tara and Black Tara by the side of *Bodhisatava* in the Buddhist monasteries there. *Bodhisatava*, the incarnation of Buddha and the Mother Goddess Tara, did not conflict with the core belief structures of Shiva-Shakti of Kashmir Shaivism and the indestructability of all existence symbolized by the principle of incarnation in Vaishnavite Hinduism. As a matter of fact, Hindus took Buddha into their own sacred pantheon, as one of the incarnations of Vishnu and offered worship to him in the manner, the Buddhists evolved.



BODHISATIVA, KASHMIR

Vassilyev in *Der Buddhismus* writes, "The spread of Buddhism to Kashmir is an event of extraordinary importance in the history of that religion. Thence, forward the Valley became a mistress in the Buddhist doctrine and the headquarters of a particular school, the

Mahayan and Sarvastivadin. The influence of Kashmir was very marked, especially in the spread of Buddhism beyond India. From Kashmir it penetrated to Qandhar and Kabul and thence over Bactria. Tibetan Buddhism had also its essential origin from Kashmir, so great is the importance of the Valley in the history of this religion."

Contrary to the belief of western historians and indologists, who were later joined by Muslim historians, that there was a state of conflict between the two religions, Buddhism and Hinduism in India as well as in Kashmir coexisted without any concussion. Theological tenets aside, the systemic expressions of Hinduism did not conflict with the systemic expressions of Buddhism. The systemic boundaries of the theological formats of Hinduism and Buddhism were neither fixed nor bounded. The philosophical assumptions of the two religions coincided. Buddhism grew out of the Hindu religious thought. Its evolution did not involve any geographical divide or ethnic and cultural conflict. Nor did the Hindu and Buddhist theological complexes belong to two different conflicting economic organizations or any rural-urban divide. India remained for an incredibly long time of its history a continental organization of agrarian social units, the villages. Conflict in social philosophies of India of the villages was un-imaginable.

Religious conflict as a part of the social processes in India was ushered in by the advent of Semitic religions. Conflict evolved as a concept of religion in the Semitic world. The western scholars of the Indian history and Muslim Indologist viewed the history of the Indian religions within their perspective of history. The history of the western religions was characterized by conflict, because the western religions visualized the salvation of mankind as an issue of social acceptance. Hinduism, underlined logical imperatives, which were above and beyond, and unrelated to value-relativism. Buddhism in its approach was not different. It also did not accept proselytisation. Nor did it accept religious war, apostasy and inquisition as a part of religion.

During the reign of Lalitaditya Muktapida, when the Hindu kingdom of Kashmir was forged into an imperial political organization and Hinduism was at its peak, the Sarvastivadin Buddhism school grew into its final shape. Sarvastivadin Buddhism accepted Buddha as the Buddhistva---the timeless, perfect and infinite reality along with the expression of 'primeval energy' of the Mother Goddess in the form of Tara. Sarvastivadin

Buddhism was spread by the Hindu masters of Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister of Lalitaditya Muktapida, a Hindu, who was a devotee of Buddhism, built a great Buddhist monastery and a Chaitya at Chakradhara where a colossal Buddha was installed and a great Stupa raised. It became an important Buddhist centre of learning. Little of it remains now except the plinth of the monastery. At another place to the north of Srinagar, called Borus, close to Shrine of *Kheer Bhavani* at Tulla Mulla, in Kashmir, a Buddhist Chaitya was built in which a tall Buddha in stone, was installed on the side of a spring in the middle of which was a stone temple. The Chaitya was lost, the Buddha image survived the vagaries of time and stood up on the side of the spring out of which a small stream of water flowed. The place was known as Bodh Gyan and the Hindus of Borus worshipped at the spring temple. Decades before the rise of the Muslim militancy in Kashmir, the Buddha statue was hurled into the spring. No one heard the Hindus of Borus cry in protest against the sacrilege. In distress they moved the stone images of the Bodh Gyan to a place closer to where they lived. They could not lift the Buddha and place it back on its pedestal on the side of the spring or carry it to where they had placed the other images for worship. Bodh Gyan disappeared. After the outbreak of the Muslim militancy in Kashmir, the Hindus of Borus were driven out and their houses burnt. Last vestiges of the Bodh Gyan were also erased.

PART I LEGEND OF SARASWATI

Hindus of Kashmir claim themselves to be Saraswat Brahmins and trace their ancestry to the Saraswat Brahmins living along the course of the legendary river Saraswati, which formed the cradle of Vedic civilization of India. The Vedic civilization evolved over the entire north of India and its evolution was spread over centuries, and over an expanse of space which spread almost upto the Vindhya mountains in the south of India.

In Rig Veda, Saraswati is praised as the Mother among rivers; *Ambitame*, *Naditame*, *Devitame*, Saraswati. Its literal meaning is; the greatest of goddesses, the greatest of mothers, the greatest of rivers. Geological evidence has been found to suggest that the river Saraswati flowed down a north-westernly course, in northern India from Himalaya to the Rann of Kutch, in ancient times. It is believed to have dried up sometime between Vedic period and the time of Mahabharata. There is geological evidence to believe that, the withdrawal of the waters of Yamuna and Satluj, which fed Saraswati, dried its waters. Saraswati was then the major river in northern India, independent of the Indus river system and the Ganges river system. After Saraswati vanished it became a legend.

In a revealing study of the history of the river Saraswati, Pandit M. L. Munshi, a geologist and researcher of great reputation, notes; "The quest for the lost river began about a hundred years back when a British engineer, C.F.Oldham, while riding across the broad dry bed of a small stream called Ghaggar visualized that a three kilometers wide river bed could not have been made by a puny seasonal stream like Ghaggar but must have been the course of a bigger river in the past". Munshi notes further, "In the area between Indus and Ganges river systems or to be precise between the present courses of Yamuna and Satluj, a couple of seasonal dry channels flowing in westerly and south westerly directions along very broad dry river beds namely Ghaggar and Sirsa met at Rasula near Patiala. Further downstream in Bhatnair near Bikaner in Rajasthan, they are joined by another dry seasonal channel called Chitrang which can be traced upstream eastwards upto Yamuna, and which is most likely the old abandoned course of Yamuna."

Tracing the course of Saraswati, Munshi notes, "Upstream of Bhatnair and downstream of Karnal, the Ghaggar is joined by another buried channel (dry river course), known at present as Wale, Sirhind or Wahind which can be traced upstream as far as Ropar, where Satluj emerges from the hills after traversing the Himalayas. It was the original course of the Satluj before it changed its course to join the Bipasa (Beas) of the Indus system. A few more dried up channels north of Sirhind Channel, called Nahiwala have been traced upto Ropar. In Bikaner and further down stream for a length of about 150 km, the course of the channel is known as Sotur or Hakra, where it has attained a width of five to eight kilometers. At places the course of river is still called Saraswati by local people. Further downstream the river course can be easily traced around Mirgarh, Dilawar in Bahawalpur and eastern Sind in Pakistan, southern Rajasthan into Rann of Kutch through Gujarat, quite distinct from the abandoned eastern channels of the Indus delta."

Munshi's research throws a new light on the Sind valley civilization and reveals a new direction, which the cultural evolution of the Sind valley and Harappan people assumed. His findings point out to a new civilization linkage which relates the Harappan culture to the people living along the course of the river Saraswati. Munshi notes, "Along the course of this buried channel 175 pre and early historic archaeological sites have been excavated and confirmed by archaeologists, while only 85 of similar sites have been located along Indus in Pakistan. These sites have revealed dwelling sites potsherds and Mohanjodara and Harappan types of objects and artifacts. Recent excavations at Dholavaria and other places have revealed figures of ocean going vessels providing clues to the navigability of the dried up river. It has been universally accepted that the earliest settlements in the Indian sub-continent and elsewhere flourished in major river valleys and not dry river beds, abandoned river course or uplands." Munshi doubts if pre-historic and early historic settlements, especially with a riverine culture, could have come up on the sides of the buried channels, unless a major river flowed along.

Munshi notes that historical evidence is available to suggest that Bhawalpur in Pakistan and Bikaner in Rajasthan continued to be well watered at the time of Alexander's invasion of India in third century BC and until ninth century AD. Todd writes in his major study, 'Annals of Rajasthan', that Hakra in Bikaner dried up in the eleventh century AD. Arab and Greek historical sources indicate that Satluj was not a river of Punjab till eleventh century AD, when

it abandoned course and joined the river Beas. Beyond its confluence with Beas, Satluj is called Beas, though Satluj is the larger of the two rivers.



Indus river system showing Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Markanda/Sarasvati/Ghaggar rivers.

There is enough scientific evidence, collected by latest scientific methods like satellite imagery, which corroborates the existence of a dried river bed, along the course, which in ancient time was taken by the river Saraswati. Munshi notes, "The existence of 1600km long dry river bed/ buried channel/ paleo channel, varying in width from three to twelve kilometers, extending from Sirnoor Hills in Himachal Pradesh to Rann of Kutch, has been confirmed by the study of both black and white and coloured satellite images by experts, including Bimal Ghosh, Amal Karand and the scientists of Central Arid Zone Research Institute, P.S.Thakur of ISRO and others and that paleo-channels or dry river beds extending from the present tri-junction of Himachal Pradesh, the Punjab and Haryana, through Patiala, Karnal, Bhawalpur, Bikaner, south Rajasthan and Sind to Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, is the dried course of once mighty Saraswati river, quite distinct from the Indus river system."

Saraswati dried up due to the diversion of the river Yamuna to the river system of the Ganges, sometime in between the Vedic age and the time of the Mahabharata and the diversion of the water of Satluj to the river system of the Indus, sometime after the end of first millennium. Munshi notes; "Saraswati river was deprived of its water by diversion of Yamuna to Ganges system, sometimes between Vedic age and the epic of Mahabharata and Satluj to Indus system, much later due to neutectonic movements along the axis of Aravali range and was reduced to a dry river bed of several kilometers in width. Having lost its snow-fed sources the mighty Saraswati river disappeared and only legend remained in the folklore. The inhabitants from the banks migrated to far off places, like Kashmir, Western Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and even as far as Kerala, along the west coast some of whom still call themselves as Saraswat Brahmins or Saraswats. In mythology the prominence of Saraswati was taken over by Ganga."

There is enough ground to believe that the people of Kashmir formed a part of Saraswati civilization, because, it is hardly possible that the people who lived in Kashmir could not have established contact with the Saraswat culture, which spread over whole of the northern India. The human skeletons found at Burzahom in Kashmir point to a common ancestry of the people of northern India, who in the ancient times lived along the banks of the river Saraswati. The ritual structures of the Hindus of Kashmir have their source in the Vedic Kalpa Sutras and Grah Sutras. The entire system of the theological imperatives, the Hindus in Kashmir are bound to, have their origin in the Vedic religious precept of the Sanatan Dharma, the Sanskrit civilization of India evolved.

The conceptualization of temples as the abode of the *Parmishwara*, the Almighty God and the spiritual identity between man and his creator, realized in his communion with *Paramishwara*, in the Hindu temples, is strickly Vedic in content. The Hindu temples in Kashmir symbolize the unity of the Sanskrit civilization of India.

PART II

VITASTA MAHATMAYA

Vedic civilization flourished along the course of the legendary river Saraswati. The people of Kashmir lived on the banks of the river Vitasta, flowing across the entire valley of Kashmir, from the foot of the Pir Panchal mountain range, where its source is located at Verinag, to its confluence at the Jhelum village, with the river Krishen Ganga, flowing in the territories of the Jammu and Kashmir under the occupation of Pakistan.

The Hindus of Kashmir, very much like the Saraswat people, built their *Tirthas* and their places of worship along the banks of river Vitasta. The Vedic people venerated rivers, worshipped them as the embodiment of the divine mother *Bhavani*, and praised them as the source of life and means of its sustenance. For the Hindus of Kashmir, the Vitasta is the embodiment of Goddess Parvati, consort of Lord Shiva. Vedic literature refers to Vitasta as a prominent river of north India. Vitasta is mentioned in the Mahabharata as well.

In the Nilmata Purana, Vitasta is called Nilja, the daughter of Nil Nag, the son of Kashyapa, who drained out the waters of the lake, Satisar, which once filled the valley of Kashmir. The birth of Vitasta is described in the Nilmata Purana. Pandit Kashi Nath Dhar, a Sanskrit scholar of Kashmir, refers to Nilmata Purana and notes, "The contact with Pisachas had made the inhabitants of the valley unclean, hence to purify them Kashyapa requested Lord Shiva to prevail upon his consort, Parvati, to manifest herself in the form of a river. Parvati requested Shiva to make an opening through which she could come to surface after assuming the form of a river. There upon Lord Shiva struck the ground with his trident, which measured one 'Vitasti' and through this fissure the goddess Parvati gushed forth in the form of Vitasta. The name Vitasta was given to her (this river) by Lord Shiva himself." Nilmata Purana refers to sixty rivers of Kashmir and Madra. "But among them", Dhar notes, "Vitasta yields the highest importance and respect, which can be testified by an account in the Nilmata that this river disappeared twice and only consented to flow permanently when given the company of other goddesses i.e. Ganga in the form of Sindhu in Kashmir, Godavari in the form of Gudar and Vishoka in the form of Lakshmi." Vishoka is now known as the Vishav which forms a tributary of Vitasta.

A reference is made to the river Vitasta in the ancient text of "Haracaritacintamani", an epic of thirty cantos written by the poet Rajanaka. He was the brother of Saivacharya Jayarath who composed the Shaiva treatise named "Tantra Lokaviveka". The epic gives a vivid description of the *Tirthas*, and the pilgrimages along the course of the Vitasta, unraveling the spiritual heritage of the people of Kashmir.

An eulogical description of the river Vitasta and its religious significance is given in the Vitasta Mahatmayas. The Vitasta Mahatmayas bring to surface the close linkage between Vitasta and the course of evolution of the Sanskrit civilization of Kashmir, the material culture of its people and their spiritual achievements. Possibly more than one Vitasta Mahatmya was composed, but only two of the Mahatmayas are extant. Both the Mahatmayas narrate at length the origin and source of the river Vitasta, describe the course it takes and provide an elaborate description of the *Tirthas*, the places of pilgrimages located along its banks.

According to the Vitasta Mahatmayas, which do not differ much from each other, Kashmir was a huge lake known as Satisar, formed of waters collected in a trough rimmed by the Himalayan mountain range and the Pir Panjal mountain range. Kashyapa Rishi requested Balram, the elder brother of Lord Krishna, to drain out the waters of Satisar. He also requested Lord Vishnu to destroy the demon Jalodbhava, who had made Satisar his abode. Jalodbhava troubled Rishis and other seers and their followers who lived along the banks of the lake. The Mahatmays record, that Balram acceded to the request of Kashyapa and opened up a gorge in the mountain barrier at Khandan Yar, some distance ahead of Varahmulla, present Baramulla, with a stroke of the plough, which he wielded as his weapon of war, to let out the waters of the lake Satisar. As the waters of the lake began to recede, Lord Vishnu destroyed the demon Jalodbhava.

The Vitasta Mahatmayas, record that Goddess Uma, Laxmi, Aditi, Sachi, Diti, Ganga and Karishni had come to Satisar along with their spouses to see the draining out of the water and elimination of Jalodbhava. Rishi Kashyapa requested them to bless the land by assuming the form of water to purify it from the sins of demons as he considered Sati Desh most sacred and pure. The Rishi approached Goddess Uma first. She requested her consort Lord Shiva; "O, father of the World, I shall assume the form of a river but make a stroke with Your spear near the abode of Nila, where O, Lord while breaking the mountain was placed the

pointed end of the plough. By that stroke, I shall flow to meet the great river Sindhu."

As soon as Lord Shiva struck his trident and made a hole equal to a Vitasti, about four inches long, water sprouted forth. Lord Shiva named the river as Vitasta as it was formed by a Vitasti. The place where the spring was formed, came to be known as Vitasatra. With the passage of time, it became Vyeth Vathur. No sooner did the sinners bathe in the spring, Vitastatra disappeared. Rishi Kashyap prayed to Goddess Uma to reappear. She appeared at *Panzhast* (*Panzeth*) a village near Qazigund. There too sinners defiled her water. She disappeared again, but Rishi prayed to her to reappear to sanctify Kashmir. She granted his request and appeared at Chakra. There also sinners bathed in its waters and corrupted it. On Rishi Kashyapa's request and the prayers of thousands of Brahmins, the beautiful spring was brought out at the hermitage of Rishi Narsimha. Rishi Kashyapa worshiped Goddess Uma with great devotion. He prayed and requested her that she had powers to purify the sinners and sanctify the land. On his repeated entreaties, the Goddess promised that she would not disappear any further and assumed the form of water at all the four places --Vitastra, Pazhast, Chakra and at the hermitage of Narasimha. She also told him to pray to other Goddesses to assume the form of water and join her to sanctify Sati Desha ever after. Lord Shiva granted the boon that the river formed by many streams would be called the Vitasta.

Rishi Kashyap then prayed to Goddess Laxmi. The Goddess appeared at the foot of Kramsara, Vishnu Paad and became known as Vishoka, meaning without grief. She was joined by Ramya at Tokna. Both of them joined Vitasta at Ghambheera or Sangam below Bijbehara. Vishoka got corrupted to Vaishav and Raamya to Rambhi Aara. Ramya is the sister of Shorash Naga or Shesh Nag. The water of Shesh Nag joins Lambodhari, (Lidar) at Pahalgam. Lidar joins Vitasta between Khanabal and Bijbehara.

Aditi, the mother of Devtas, appeared in Brang Pargana and joined Vitasta at Aara Path. Shachi, the wife of Indra, assumed the form of a river and came to be known as Harsha Patha and appeared from Achabal springs. It also joins Vitasta at Aara Patha, besides numerous tributaries from Panzath, Brangi, Trikoti, Verinag, Sandran etc, forming the big Vitasta river. Ganga appeared in the form of Sindhu and joined the river at Shadipura, which is also called Prayag of Kashmir.

Geogical evidence corroborates the legend that valley of Kashmir was filled with water and formed a huge lake. Perhaps the waters of the lake were drained out by geological changes which opened a gorge in mountain barriers to the west of the lake near Baramulla. A well-known geologist D.N.Wadia writes in 'Geology of Kashmir'; "Pliestocene or post Pliocene deposits of nature of fluviatile, lacustrine or glacial, spread over many parts of Kashmir, occupy a large superficial extent. The most interesting as well as conspicuous examples of these are the lacustrine deposits seen as low flat mounds bordering the slopes of mountains above the modern alluvium of the Jhelum. These are known as *Karewas* in the Kashmiri language. The *Karewas* formation occupies nearly half of the Valley. They have a width from eight to sixteen miles along the south-west side of the Valley, extending for a length of some fifty miles from Shopian to Baramulla. They have held to be the surviving remnants of deposits of a lake which once filled the whole valley basin from end to end. The draining of that lake, by the opening and subsequent deepening of the outlet at Baramulla, has laid them bare to denudation, which has dissected the once continuous alluvium into isolated mounds." The mounds are known as *Karewas* and *Udar* in Kashmiri.

The Nilmat Purana, Haracarita Cintamani, Rajatarangini and Mahatmayas, acknowledge that, 'Nila Naga,' 'Nila Kunda, "Vitastatra', now called 'Vyeth Vothur' is the source of the river Vitasta. Perhaps over the years Nila Naga or Nila Kunda, also assumed the ancient name of the territorial district, the Pargna of Vera, in which it is located and came to be called Verinag. The ancient village of Vera must have been a place of many ancient stone temples.

Dhar notes; "The present Shahabad in Anantnag district was known as 'Vera' in the ancient times. Abu-1-Fazal also records this very name for this Pargana. Hence it is no surprise that the spring Nilanaga came to be known as the 'spring' of Vera or Verinaga also. The name of the village came to be associated with this spring and it could be located easily thus. Such Nagas-springs which have the name of the village or the locality in which they are situated, prefixed or suffixed with them, are legion in Kashmir. Abu-1-Fazal testifying to its sanctity has recorded that many temples of stone were erected near it. However, these massive temples of stone are not there now, but a small Shivalaya exists still there. These stones must have been used for renovation and enclosing the spring by later kings. This fact can be easily discerned even

now. Moreover, a hamlet in the close vicinity of this spring is known as Verinag even now. "

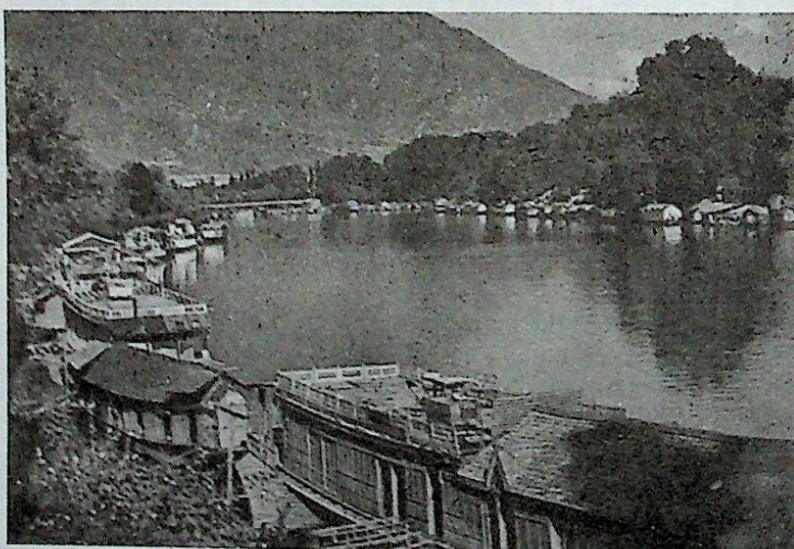


SATELLITE PICTURE SHOWING ORIGIN OF VITASTA

Vitasta originating from Nil Naga, Nil Kunda, Vyeth Vothur or Verinag, is joined by its major tributaries near the Anantnag town. Kashi Nath Dhar notes; "The present Bringi stream called Bhringi, in ancient times is the first to join its waters. From the northeast Arpath stream mentioned in Nilamata as Harsapatha, and from the west waters issuing from springs of Achabal, ancient Aksavala, meet the waters of Vitasta at Khanbal. From the north ancient Ledari, modern Lider, also rushes down with its voluminous waters to join this confluence and the Vitasta flows down majestically to Srinagar in all her glory."

As the river Vitasta winds down its way to Khanabal near Anantnag, the ancient *Tirtha* of Vijyeshwara presently Vejabror stands on its banks. The *Tirtha* was built by King Ashoka. The *Tirtha* suffered damage during the Muslim rule. About five kilometers downstream, Vitasta is joined by its tributaries Veshiva and Rambiar. The confluence of the Vitasta and its tributaries is now called Sangam, its ancient name being Gambira Sangani. On the confluence of Sangam stood a *Tirtha* which was built by seer Mihirdatta, spiritual mentor of king Chanderapida 686-695 AD. No

ruins of the temple are found at Sangam. Dhar notes; "Some miles below Sangam the Vitasta with its replenished waters flows close to the old city of Avantipur founded by king Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883). Ruins of two temples built of stone are seen there now. The Srinagar - Jammu National Highway passes very close to these. This town was very famous even after the death of its founder and finds mention in many chronicles including Rajatarangini. In the time of Avanti Varman, Vitasta was dredged by one Suyya and its course regulated. The scare of floods and famines looming large in the horizon every year was averted." Dhar notes further; "At a distance of five to six miles below on the Udar itself was located the city founded after the name of Lalitaditya Muktapida, known as Lyetpor today. Since this town was built in the absence of the King by his architect, so he did not take kindly to it. At present no ruins of the old city are seen above ground only lovely saffon-fields standing on these Udars greet our eyes. While coming down from these Udars we see the Vitasta touch the fringe of Padampur, called Pampur now-a-days. This township was built by Padma brother of Jaya Devi a concubine of Lalitapida (A. D. 900) and a temple of Vishnu was also erected there. At this place the Vitasta takes a slight curve towards the right just to be quite close to Puranadhishthana (Pandrethan) the old capital of Kashmir built by Praversena. At this place the Buddhists and in turn Vaishnavas and Saivas constructed their places of worship, the remains of which lie scattered all over".



VITASTA

Vitasta enters the city of Srinagar, known as Pravarapur in ancient times, around the southern slope of Shankaracharya hill. An ancient temple, known as the temple of Shurah yar is situated on the right bank of Vitasta. Srinagar city is situated on both sides of Vitasta, which are joined by several bridges. The banks of Vitasta, where temples are constructed are known as *Yaarbal*.

About five kilometers downstream Vitasta is joined by Mahasarit now called Tsoonth Kol, through which waters of Dal Lake flow out. Mahasarit joins Vitasta at Ksurikaba now known as Khodabal. A temple called Masika Swamin was built on the banks of Mahasarit at the place which is now called Mysum. The confluence of Tsoonth Kol and Vitasta was a known *Tirtha* in ancient Kashmir. Dhar writes; "Bilhana in his Vikramankadeva Caritam (xviii, 28) says that the temple of Siva called Ksemagaurivara was built at this confluence by king Ksemagupta, (A. D. 950-958). Mankha refers to it in his 'Srikanthacaritam' as "Maha Sarid Vitstyo Sangam." While Srivara in his Zaina Tarangini gives it more recent name "maari sangam". Evidently this maari is the modern maar which was a useful means of internal transport and extended up to Narvor, Nadavana in Sanskrit, before passing into the marshes of the Anchal Lake.

About a kilometer below the confluence of Mahasarit and Vitasta, a stream Ksipt Kulya now as Kuta Kol flows out of Vitasta, to join it again at Chattabal where the waters of Dood Ganga joins it. An ancient Shiva temple was built on the banks of Vitasta, which was known as Sada Shiva temple. Now the temple is known as Kathlishwar. On the right bank of the Vitasta, just in front of Kathlishwar temple is located the ancient temple known as Soma Tirtha, now called Somyar. Most sacred of the Hindu shrines and temples, many of them of great antiquity, are located on the banks of Vitasta. Ahead of Som Vihar is located the ancient temple of Lallishwari, around which the ruins of a massive ancient temple are strewn about. On the opposite bank are located several ancient temples of Purush Vihar, now known as Purushyar. A kilometer down stream is located the ruins of the ancient temple dedicated to Mahakali. On the left bank of Vitasta are strewn the ruins of several ancient temples over about three kilometers of its flow. As Vitasta takes a gentle turn westwards, the ruins of Dida Muth, built by Queen Dida, stand in silence. The Dida Muth is now known as Dida Mar, birth place of Roop Bhavani.

More than two kilometers ahead, Vitasta is joined by the waters of Dugda Ganga, now known as Dood Ganga. A tirtha

stood on the confluence of the two rivers, of which few remnants can be found now. The waters of Kuta Kol, rejoin Vitasta on its confluence with Dood Ganga. The place is known as Chattabal. On the right side of the confluence of Kuta Kol and Vitasta is located the ancient shrine of Bhokatkeshwar Bhairsta.

The waters of the river Sindh join Vitasta at Shadipur. The Sindh is a mountain stream which flows out of the Gangabal Lake. Sindh enters the plains at Dodarhama. Gangabal Lake was known in ancient times by the name of Utter Mansa. Kalhan, Haracarita Cintamai and Nilmat Purana refer to the lake as Uttara Mansa. Harmukat Ganga Mahatmaya also refers to the lake as Uttara Mansa. River Sindh pour its waters into Anchal Lake at Dodarhama. The waters of Sindh leave the lake and flow out to join Vitasta at Shadipur. Kashi Nath Dhar notes; "Sindh in Kashmir has been equated with Ganga in its sanctity and importance. Nilamata, Harcarita Cintamani and Mahatmyas have repeatedly referred to it. Nilamata identifies the Vitasta with the Yamuna and the Sindh with Ganga the two most famous and holiest rivers of India. Hence their confluence has also been called Prayaga (Nila-vv 297). It is held in great esteem and respect by the devotees since very ancient times. However, on the evidence of Kalhana we have to believe that the present position of Sangam is not so very ancient. This confluence was artificially engineered by Suyya while busy in dredging operations for desilting the Vitasta. This was done under the orders of King Avanti Varman (A.D. 855-883). He further says that at the former confluence the two temples of Vishnu Svamin and Vainya Svamin were situated close to Phalapura and Parihasapura, Kashmiri (Paraspura), and the confluence which Suyya contrived near Sundaribhavana the temple of Hrsihesa Yogasvamin was erected as it was the deity, Ishtdevi of Suyya.

Parihaspur and Phalapura were two cities founded by Lalitaditya Mukhtapida (750A.D). Relying on evidence of Kalhan, it can be assumed that Vitasta flowed near the two cities just below the Udars—Karewa uplands on which these were situated and the river Sindh joined Vitasta there. The upland has heaps of ruins, few of which have been excavated. Besides many Buddhist monuments, there are many Hindu structures. R.C.Kak, a well known archeologist of Jammu and Kashmir State, writes; "Crossing the ravine in which nestles the little village of Diwar Yakman Pora and ascending the plateau opposite are seen the immense ruins of two extra ordinary large temples, one of them has a peristyle larger than that of Martand." This bed could be the dry bed of

Vitasta now as it flowed then before its course was changed. The two temples may be the temples of Visnu Swamin and Vainya Swamin built on those heights. At present there is a Shivalya in the middle of the stream, on a pedestal of stones, besides a Chinnar tree. The Prayag at Shadipur is considered as sacred as the Prayag at Allahabad.

Several kilometers down stream is situated the township of Sumbal, situated on both banks of the Vitasta. The town was founded by King Jayapida when he built the ancient capital of Kashmir, Jayapura on the banks of Vitasta in the eighth century A.D.

Ahead of the Sumbal bridge to the left is situated the shrine of Nandi Kesvara alluded to Nandi Kesava. A short distance from Sumbal, Vitasta flows into the Wullar Lake. This very big lake is named as Mahapadma-saras founded by Maha Padama Naga who is believed to dwell in it as its presiding deity. Nilamata and other older texts relate this fact at length. The name Wular given to this lake nowadays is obviously derived from "Ullola" occurring in Jonaraja's Rajatarangini. In Srikanthacaritam, Mahapadama has been equated with "Ullola" by its commentator Jonaraja. Many myths and legends have been woven around this lake, in which it has been, mentioned that this lake was a very thickly populated town named Candrapura, and through the curse of sage Durvasa was submerged under water.

Another mountain stream Madhumati also joins Wullar Lake. Madhumati is referred to in Nilmat Purana for its sanctity. Vitasta leaves Wullar near the town of Sopore, or ancient Soyapur. Five kilometers below Sopore, Vitasta is joined by another mountain stream the Puhur Nalla. Jonaraaja refers the Puhur as Sahara stream. Some miles downstream the Vitasta enters the Varahaksetra, and the principal town of this Ksetra is known as Varahamula, Baramulla of today. The name is evidently derived from the ancient, *Tirtha* of Vishnu, Adi Varatia near the site of the present Koti Tirtha very close to the river bank. This shrine was destroyed by Sikandar Butshikan to which Jonaraja refers explicitly. The town was located on the right bank of the river. It has now spread over extensively to the left also eating into the Karewas adjacent to it. In those days a bridge also existed over the Vitasta.

After leaving Baramulla, the Vitasta slowly narrows down, flowing over boulders in ferocious speed. The place was called in

ancient times as Dvara, a mention of which is made by Kalhana. Presently the place is called Drung. On the left bank of the Vitasta, King Hushka built his capital Hushkapora. Lalitaditya Mukhtapida built a massive temple of Vishnu as well as a great Budhist Vihara there. Ksemagupta spent his last days at the two *Muths* he built at Hushapora.

The Kushan ruler Kanishka founded a city on the bank of Vitasta, half a mile above Ushkar. Some distance above the gorge in which the Vitasta goes down and rises up again as a river by its own right in the west Pakistan under the name of Jhelum, "Indradvadasi" festival used to be celebrated in ancient times. On this day presents and clothes were given away to the poor. This day is still observed in Kashmir under the same name "Inderbah" on the twelfth of the bright half of Bhadrapada but with a difference. It used to be a day of festivities and gaiety, but now this day has been reserved for manes. Sharada is performed there on the spot which is known as "Kanimaj" Kashmiri Kaniyasi-Mata in Sanskrit. The name as such does not occur in any ancient text even though Indradvadasi is mentioned in the Nilamata. The place has been called as Varahaksetra in general.

Vitasta flows out of Kashmir at Khadanyar. Vitasta Mahatmaya refers to the place as Khadanhara. Perhaps the place assumed its name from the great temple Khadana Vihar built by one of the queens, Khadana by name, of the King Meghavhana. River Karishi appeared in the north in Karnah area and became known as Krishan Ganga. It joins Vitasta at Jhelum village, now in Pakistan. It is because of the confluence of the two rivers at this point, the ongoing river was known as Jhelum. Srivara in his Rajatrangini has used Jhelum instead of Vitasta, for the first time.

From the day Shiva struck his trident to make way for the Vitasta to flow out of Vyeth Vothur, its source--- the Neel Nag, in the Veri Pargana, Vitasta has flowed down for centuries over which the Sanskrit civilization of Kashmir flourished. Hindus of Kashmir still observe the day Parvati manifested herself in the form of Vitasta at Vitastatra, now known Vyeth Vothur, on *Bhadra Shukla Trayodashi* the 13 lunar day of the month of Bhadrapada every year. The festival, now known as *Vetha Truvah*, is celebrated by making offerings of cakes made of rice flour, while reading *Sholkas* from Vitasta Mahatmayas. In the evening the Hindu women go down to the banks of the Vitasta and illuminate them with flickering earthen-ware lamps. Vitasta is the cradle of Sanaskrit civilization of Kashmir.

PART III HISTORICAL RETROSPECT

The tradition of temple construction in Kashmir grew on the pattern of the temple construction in the Vedic India. Sir Walter Lawrence wrote in 'The Valley of Kashmir', "Kashmir is full of temples, shrines, centres of pilgrimage or *Tirthas*. Almost every peak, cave and spring has a temple dedicated to Shiva, Bhavani, Ganesh, Vishnu, and Buddha." Lawrence further adds an interesting observation; "It is dangerous to discuss a great mystery as the Hindu religion, yet I cannot help noticing the important part which the springs and snakes play in their mythology, nor must I omit the fact that Hindus seize with avidity on any abnormal display of the powers of nature. The intermittent springs in Ranbir Singh Pora where the water rises and falls in an unaccountable manner at fixed periods; the Gangajatten hillside in Donsu, dry all the year till September, when it becomes a waterfall; the subterraneous fire at Soyam in Uttar Machhipora where the people cook their food over the hot soil, attract numerous pilgrims and are ranked among one of the holy places of Kashmir." Lawrence wrote towards the close of the nineteenth century, when India was a part of the impregnable British colonial empire. By then, the British Indologists had learnt not to chide India. They had realized the grandeur of the Hindu civilization with its world view different from that of the Semitic civilization of the West. The Hindu viewed the expressions of nature as miracles. The Semitic people viewed exceptions to the expressions of nature as miracles. Hinduism in Kashmir symbolized the continuity of the history of Hinduism in India. The temples of Kashmir were an inseparable part of the Hindu civilization of India.

There was a tradition in Kashmir of building temples of wood, but there is not a single surviving ancient wooden temple. The principles, particulars and designs of temples in Kashmir, were strictly adhered to rules prescribed in *Vastu Shastra*. According to *Prasadanandnam*, a brief treatise on Hindu architecture and sculpture, much stress had to be laid on the particular period of time, the auspicious conjunction of stars, performance of rites and all such other related items conducive to the successful completion of the constructional work of the temples and edifices. The site chosen for the temple had to be demarcated and worship offered to it with flowers, rice and other *Puja* material. The construction would begin with the usual salutations to Ganesha

and also to Karanjeshvari, the divine mother of trees, which was the main source of timber for constructional work of temples and mansions. This gives evidence that the super-structure or the support to the structures of earlier temples was of wood. Details regarding the moulding of the bases, the *pitha* or pedestal, *Garba Griha*, or the sanctuary of the temple, various sizes of idols or statues and their position. *Mandaps* or open halls, platforms, raised platform along with the walls of council halls, and also the construction of *Kalasha* were also incorporated in *Prasadamandnam*. Kashmiri temples had also *Kalasha* at the top, since it is believed, that *Dhvaja* or the flag staff is a must, since it brings bliss and prosperity to the master. It further says without it, demons come and reside in the temple. The presence of *Dhvaja* gratifies the divine beings. In Kashmir these were to be circular and made of strong and durable wood. The wood being a perishable item, it did not leave any trace behind in the present standing ruins.

Kalhana, mentions that the traditional wooden architecture with its decorative excellance was reduced to ashes by devastating fires in Srinagar and the worst one that occurred in 1123 AD, engulfed Shrines, Muths, houses and burnt even shops. Later, stone came to be widely used by Hindus and Buddhists to build their places of worship. King Ashoka is said to have built stupas in third century BC. The Buddhist remains at Harwan, Hoinar and Hutamar reveal unique artistic tradition and fine workmanship. Kashmiri artisans evolved a distinct, indigenous style of Hindu temple architecture, and were known for skills in building. They were called *Shashtra Shilpina*.

No elaborate investigatory work has been undertaken so far into the history of the temple construction in Kashmir, though abundant social and cultural data is available in the *Nilmat Purana*, *Rajatarangini*, the literary works of Kshemendra, and the legend and tradition of the Mahatmayas. The temple construction must have commenced in the historical period of the *Nilmat Purana*. But no investigation has been carried out to locate and identify their form and architecture. It is certain that the construction of temples and Viharas reached a fairly advanced level during the period of Ashoka and the Kushans.

The temple building in Kashmir gained momentum with the advent of Karakota dynasty. The kings of the Karakota dynasty built their shrines in dressed stone and dedicated them to Vishnu and Shiva. These Karkota kings, ushered golden age of temple

building in Kashmir. Lalitaditya Muktapida (701-737 AD) built a number of new towns with great temples. Kalhan notes in Rajatarangini; "There is no town or village, no river or lake, no island where the king did not build a sacred foundation." He built the famous and elegant Sun temple at Martand and Parihaskesava at his capital Parihasspura. Lalitaditya is said to have built four Vishnu temples—the Muktakesva, Parihaskesava, Mahavaraha and Govardhanadvara, besides a Buddhist monastery and a grand Caitya. Once an important Buddhist centre, little of it remains now except the plinths of a Buddhist monastery, a caitya that once enshrined a colossal Buddha image and a great stupa. In fact, he had as his prime minister a Chinese Buddhist named Tsiang-Kiun whose name translated in Sanskrit, was Cankuna. The prime minister constructed a lofty stupa and gold images of Jina (Buddha). A gigantic statue of Muktakesava (Vishnu) was made of gold weighing 84,000 tolas (980 tonnes)! Another statue of Parihaskesava was built with 3,36,000 tolas (3,919 tonnes) of Silver. Lalitaditya built another colossus of Buddha with 1,01,64,000 tolas (11,855 tonnes) of bronze.



VISHNU TEMPLE
AVANTIPURA



FOURFACED VISHNU
AVANTIPURA

The second golden age of temple building was during the rule of Avantivarman (855-883 AD), the founder of Uttra dynasty. The king established his capital at Avantipura, about eighteen miles

from Srinagar on Anantnag road. He built two temples, one dedicated to Shiva, Avantisvara and other dedicated to Vishnu, Avantiswamin. The Shiva temple is of the panchayatana type, with the main temple at the centre of the court and four subsidiary shrines at the four corners of the main sanctum. It has a stair on each of its four sides, supported on either side by flank walls. The Vishnu temple repeats the plan of Martanda on a smaller scale.

The final refinement of form and a more polished look is seen in temples built by Sankarvarman (883-902 AD) who succeeded Avantivarman. He shifted his capital to Sankarapattnam, modern Pattan and built two temples, Sugandhesa and Sankaragaurisa. These structures reveal a refinement in handling of material, treatment of ornamentation and have a more polished look. The Rajatarangini mentions about three Shiva temples at Sankarapartnam. The first larger temple was built by king himself and was named Sankaragaurisvara the second smaller version named after Sugandha his queen as Sugandhesa and the third temple Ratnavardhanesa was built by his minister Ratanavardhana. The Sugandhesa shrine is twelve feet seven inches square and open on one side only. It has trefoiled niches externally on other sides. These niches contained images. The Sankaraqausisvara temple is bigger one and has images of Shiva as well as of Ganesha.

By the beginning of the tenth century, the growth of style had come to an end but small shrines continued to be raised. Among the surviving temples of this period, one at Buniar is still preserved. The temple situated two miles above Rampur close to Jhelum valley road. This temple stands on a double base similar to other structures of this kind in Kashmir. The quadrangle measures 145 feet by 119-6 feet and consists of 53 cells and the gateway. The gateway is a double chambered structure faced on each open side by a trefoil arch surrounded by a steep pediment. The cells are rectangular, seven feet long by four feet broad. Each cell has a single trefoil entrance enclosed in a high-pitched pediment resting on half-engaged columns. In the centre of each range of cells except the one in which the gateway stands, is an apartment of larger dimensions preceded by a pair of taller columns which are advanced about four feet from the rest of peristyle. Another temple named Dhetha mandir, which is in ruins, lies further below Buniar (Baramulla). Its central shrine is built in green limestone and coated with lime plaster.

In the conceptions of architectural style, there are three major structural formations. These are; (i) a recess or niche, composed of trefoil arch within a high pitched triangular pediment, (ii) the pyramidal roof, (iii) employment throughout of a variety of fluted pillars with capital.

Ancient stone temples of Kashmir are either square or oblong, subdivided into closed or open types. The doorways are everywhere rectangular and Brahmanical temples face in all directions. However, they bear a unique feature in having the water spout, without exception, to the left of the image. The temple walls are profusely carved. The basements of these temples consist of single or double platform, thus giving a single or double passage for circumambulating. Their core is composed of stone rubble and the walls of the shrine which stand on them, have no foundations. Most of the early stone temples stand in the center of an open courtyard surrounded by ranges of cells on all sides, which rest on moulded basements. The construction material employed in general in them is limestone of somewhat bluish colour. Bricks have never been used as a material of construction for the ancient temples in Kashmir. These temples are noteworthy for unique architectural elements and fine stone carving. Unusual in Indian context, the principal icon in Kashmiri temple was made of metal rather than stone.

The main architectural features of temples of Kashmir are :

- (1) The temple faces east or west.
- (2) The temples have straight-edged pyramidal roofs in two tiers instead of the curvilinear super-structure of the southern temples.
- (3) The triangular pediments enclosing trefoil niches is on all the four sides of the main shrine.
- (4) The double-chambered gateway matches the central shrine in scale and design.
- (5) The cellular layout with the row of pillars is also of a peculiar style not found elsewhere in India.
- (6) The ringed mace held by Vishnu and Durga is typical of Kashmir, as one finds in temples of Karakota and Utpla periods.
- (7) Shiva and Ganesh are often shown wearing a snake for the sacred thread.
- (8) The temple building was a ritual and every stone laid was consecrated to God by the holy chant of the Brahmins.
- (9) The temples of Kashmir are mostly to all intents and purposes manifestations of an independent ideal. The design is related more to the central shrine for the accommodation of the deity than to a place for congregational worship.

(10) Temples in Kashmir did not include any assembly halls, these consisted primarily of the main central sanctuary and in these the devotees paid obeisance.

(11) The most striking feature of Kashmiri temples is the majestic colonnade which surrounds it from all sides.

(12) The natural beauty of the site chosen for erection of the temple was an important factor.

There are elaborate rules guiding the sculpturing of images. The height or length, width, girth as also the proportions of the various limbs, each one of these is fixed according to the Tala Mana system. A *tala* is the measurement of the palm of the hand, from the tip of the middle finger to the wrist, and is equal to the length of the face. The *navatala* system wherein the total length or height of the image is nine, *nava* times the length of the face, is recommended for the Gods.

According to Anand Coomarswamy, "The typical Brahminical temples of Kashmir, from about 750-1250 AD, have a special character of their own and in some uses a curiously European aspect, partly a Gandharan inheritance of certain elements, though all the details are Indian. The special forms include a double pyramidal roof; a triangular pediment enclosing a trefoil niche; fluted columns with Doric or ionic capitals a wood or stone 'lantern' ceiling of superimposed intersecting squares; and cloistered courts or colonnaded peristyles surrounding the main shrine."

While concluding, 'Kashmir and Related Schools' in 'The Art of Ancient India', Susan Huntington records, 'The Buddhist and Hindu art of Kashmir came to an abrupt end, when Muslims became the dominant political force in the region around 1339 AD, when Shah Mirza, a Muslim adventurer, overthrew the Lohara dynasty and major patronage was no longer available'

PART IV
TEMPLE DIETIES

DEVI PUJA

1

A striking uniformity exists between the forms of worship in the temples of Kashmir and temples in India and it appears that the historical sequence which marked the evolution of temple worship in Kashmir is identical to the historical sequence of the temple worship in India. The worship of the Mother, in the form of Bhavani, is the basic ground-work of the Hindu temple worship in India. It is definitely the most ancient form of worship in Kashmir. The worship of the Mother Goddess is an integral part of the Sanskrit civilization of India and the broad structure of temple worship which evolved through the Indian history.

According to Rudra-Hridaya Upanishad, the combination of Uma and Sankara is known as Vishnu. In the universe, the males represent Maheshwar and females represent Bhagavati Uma. The apparent universe is in itself the form of Uma and non-apparent universe the form of Maheshwar. The union of apparent-Uma and non-apparent Shanker is known as Vishnu. Shakti is the purified *Buddhi* of man, which perceives the whole cosmology as manifestation of Shiva himself. Shiva and Shakti are inseparable, like moon and moonlight. Shiva and Shakti go together. Shiva is Light, Knowledge, and, Wisdom. Shakti is energy, the primeval force, which expresses itself in the beauty and grandeur, the power and majesty of the universe around us. Shakta school, which believes in the motherhood of God, is believed to be the oldest school of worship. The 700 verse, Devi Mahatmyam, of the 'Markandeya Purana' also known as 'Chandi' or 'Durga Saptasati' describes in detail various aspects of the Mother Goddess. Its recitation is called 'Chandipaath'. Thomas Coburn hails the hymns as, "the crystallization of the goddess tradition, the central concern of their articulation being the vision of ultimate reality in the universe in the persona of the Goddess."

The supreme power, the Brahman, manifests itself in Shakti, the feminine principle in divine form. Mahadevi Durga represents Shakti in Shaivism as well as in Vaishnavism. She is very powerful. Unless inspired by her, neither Brahma can create, nor Vishnu can sustain, nor Shiva can destroy. The attributes of the Mother Goddess have been recounted in the Markandeya Purana. She has a variety of names, consistent with her forms, attributes and roles. As Shakti, Durga has two traits, one mild represented

by Bhavani, Gauri, Uma and the other fierce represented by Durga, Kali, Shyama, Chandi and Bhairavi. She is also Jaagaddhatri Amba, Bhadrakali and Chamunda. Goddess Durga triumphs over evil, Saraswati removes ignorance and Lahshmi brings prosperity. Kali is the destroyer of evil. In Kashmir, the worship of the Mother Goddess, assumes manifestations according to the expression of her nature. She is worshipped as Uma, the part of Shiva. She is worshipped as Shakti in the form of Sharika. She is worshipped as the sustainer of the universe, the Raginya. She is worshipped as the consciousness of knowledge as Sarada and Saraswati. She is worshipped as the expression of manifest energy as Jwala. She is worshipped as expression of Kala--the absolute time, as Mahakali. She is worshipped in the form of Tripursundri as Bala Devi. She is worshipped in the form of Zystha Devi, the form Shiva gave to Shakti, to destroy the Asuras, who kept Lakshmi in captivity after churning of the Khir Sagar for the holy *Amrit*. In her different manifestations, she acquires the position of the Kul Devi.



ZYESTHA DEVI

Mother Goddess is worshipped in Kashmir in the form of Bhima Devi. She is worshipped in the form of Badar Kali, which, legend says, is the embodiment of Mahakali, who came from Bengal in pursuit of demons and destroyed them in the village of Wadipora, in Handwara district of Kashmir. She is also worshipped in the form Beda Devi, a manifestation of Saraswati. She is also

worshipped in the form of Ganga and Vitasta, the manifestations of the Goddess Ganga, flowing out of the hair locks of Lord Shiva.

The shrine dedicated to the worship of Uma Devi is located at Uma Nagri in South Kashmir. The shrine of Raginya Devi is located at Tulumul, close to Srinagar in North Kashmir. The shrine of Sharika Devi is located at Chakreshar on the western slope of Hari Parvat hill in Srinagar. The shrine dedicated to the worship of Sarada Devi and Saraswati is located in North-West Kashmir, close to confluence of the rivers Krishen-Ganga and Mudhumati at Shardi in Muzafarabad now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The shrine of Jawala Devi is located at Khrew, close to village Pampore. Shiva Bhagavati, another form of Uma, is worshipped at Akingam and Kulavagisvari, a Shakti-Shrine, is at Kulgam, the southern part of Kashmir. Bhuvanesvari is another Shakti-Shrine in Kashmir at Chandapora, Harwan in Srinagar. The shrine dedicated to Zyestha Devi is located atop the eastern spur of Shankaracharya hill, in Srinagar. The shrine of Tripursundri in the form of Bala Devi is located at Balhama in South Kashmir, near the village Zewan. The ruins of the shrine dedicated to Bhima Devi, are lying in the villages of Theid and Brain, situated on the eastern bank of Dal Lake. The ruins of the shrine dedicated to the Bedi Devi, including a spring are lying on the route from Durdagam, Pir Panjal pass of old Mughal road. The Beda Devi Tirtha is also called the Ganga Beda Tirtha. The shrine dedicated to Goddess Ganga is located at Ganga Bal in North Kashmir. Vitasta is worshipped by the Hindus in Kashmir on the auspicious day of Vetha Vutur every year at Neel Nag, now known as Verinag in south Kashmir.

SUN

In ancient Kashmir, worship of the Sun, was common. The worship of Sun was widespread in India and there are monumental Sun temples of Konark in Orissa, Modhera in Gujarat, Katarmal in Almora and unique, magnificent Sun temple at Martand in Kashmir. The Surya Pahar temple situated amongst several archaeological remains in Golpara in Assam is an ancient centre of Sun worship. The Dakshinaarka Sun temple at Gaya is associated with the rites of making offerings to ancestors. The Sun temple at Una in Madhya Pradesh is also an ancient temple. The Himachal region has yielded a fairly large number of Surya images, three standing statues, relief sculptures, stray as well as in Situ, besides a full-fledged shrine built in honour of the Sun at Nirath on the banks of the river Satluj. Another impressive Surya relief in stone has been found at Gum in Chamba district. In a Hindu temple, in the Khaneh Pass in Afghanistan, there is a

marble image of Surya, flanked by his attendants, Danda and Pingala.

In ancient times, Sun temples were known as Adityagrha, the house of Aditya. Brahma Purana gives twelve holy names of Sun God as Aditya, Visnu, Dhata, Bhaga, Pusa, Mitra, Indra, Varuna, Aryaman, Vivasvan, Amsuman, Tvasta and Parjanya considering them as twelve aspects of Sun God as Aditya. All these names are regarded significant. Aditya is the basis of life for all that exists. As Indra, Surya is the ruler of all Gods, as Dhata, he creates many types of creatures. As Tvasta, he is in all plants and herbs; as Pusa, he abides in food which nourishes supports and also protects all beings.



SURYA IN ANCIENT TEMPLE MARTAND

In Rig Veda, Sun is termed as the eye of the universe, which oversees all happenings. It is also the source and sustainer of life on earth. Sun God, or Surya, was worshiped by Manu. He has ordained that Vedic Mantra, Gayatri, addressed to Sun-God as Savitr, be muttered while standing in the morning facing east till sunrise and in the evening in a sitting posture facing west till stars

appear in the sky. Surya symbolizes the victory of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. The Narayan Upanisad describes the three Vedas as the image of Surya. The solar orbit signifies the Rig Veda. The flame in the orbit signifies the Sama Veda. The deity personified in the blazing flame signifies Yajur Veda. Thus the solar light represents the three Vedas put together. The *Suryastakam* is a hymn of hundred Shloks addressed to Surya.

Monier Williams, in his 'Religious Thought and Life in India' notes; "the triple divinity of the Hindus, was originally no more than a personification of the sun in its triple capacity of producing forms by his genial heat, preserving them by his light and destroying them by the concentrated force of his igneous matter. He is Brahma in the dawn, Vishnu at noon and Shiva at the sun-set."

BRAHMA

2

According to Hindu mythology, there are three basic divine forces or energy sources, which are represented by the trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva with basic functions of creation, preservation and destruction. Brahma is the embodied *Sattva-Guna*, the quality of goodness by which the world was called into being, Vishnu is the embodied *Rajo-Guna*, desire by which the world is preserved, and Shiva is the *Tamo-Guna*, the destructive fire by which the world is consumed.

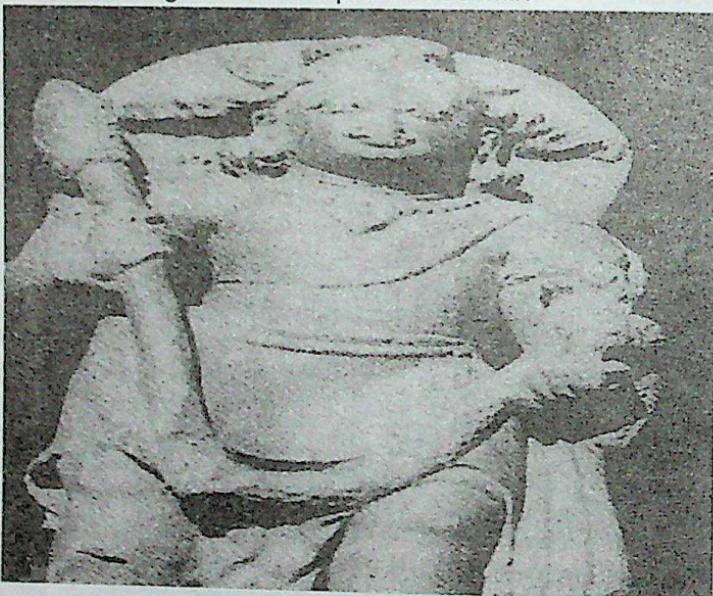
Worship of Brahma was prevalent in Kashmir in ancient times, with number of places associated with it. Exactly like in India, Brahma is venerated in Kashmir and worshiped as the creator. Nilmata Purana and Rajatrangini have recorded such facts. Several images of Brahma in metal, stones and ivory have been discovered from different places of Kashmir. One of these, a Brahma image in metal with four attendants embodying the four Vedas was also found. Some of these are kept in the State museum in Srinagar. Brahma is worshipped as a part of the Trinity and in numerous temples in India, Trimurti manifestations are worshipped. Trimurti manifestations carved in stone were worshipped in many temples in Kashmir. At Vicharnag, Nowshera in Srinagar, a Trimurti carved in stone stood out predominantly in the temple, which stood by the bank of the Vicharnag spring in open outside the new temple structure, which was constructed on the ruins of the old Vicharnag temple during the reign of the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Partap Singh.

During the Puranic period, Brahma was held in high esteem, but he was not worshipped like Vishnu and Shiva. After the Puranic period, many temples were built and were dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva, but very few were dedicated to Brahma.

VISHNU

3

The Nilmat Purana, upheld Vishnu as the supreme god and as such he is eulogized and assigned a higher stature than that of Brahma and even Shiva. Names of lakes, mountain-peaks and places are enough to establish the presence of Vaishnavism in Kashmir. Jayakhya Samhita, mentions that Pancharatra school of the Satvatas of Rama and Krishna, the two incarnations of Vishnu, gained considerable popularity in Kashmir. Bhagavata accepted Vasudeva-Narayana as the supreme deity while Pancharatra followers worshipped four Vyuahas, namely, Vasudeva, Sankarastrana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This led to the introduction of a sizeable number of Vasudeva-Narayana and Vaikuntha images in the temples in Kashmir.



VISHNU IN ANCIENT TEMPLE ,BARAMULLA

The history of the Vishnu temples goes back to the early history of Kashmir. Nilmat Purana refers to the temples built in the ancient town of Chakaradar situated at the foot of the Chakardar Udher, Karewa, situated to the west of the ancient town of Bijbehara in south Kashmir. George Buhler established the presence of a Vishnu temple at Chakardara. The temple was

dedicated to Adi Keshva. Laltaditya Mukhtapida built, Vishnu temples, in Kashmir. He built four Vishnu temples, namely Mukta Kesva, Parihas Kesva, Mahavarah and Govardhanadhara. In Mukta Kesva, an image of Keshva, the Vishnu, built of gold weighing 84,000 tolas, was installed. In the Parihas Kesva temple, an image of Vishnu, in the form of Parihaskeshva, made of 3,36000 tolas of silver, was installed.

Sri Ram and Sri Krishen, the incarnations of Vishnu are worshipped in Kashmir widely. While the temples dedicated to Sri Ram are scattered all over Kashmir, the temples dedicated to Sri Krishen are less common. At many places the remnants of ancient stone temples are linked with Sri Ram and Sita, like Sita Kund at Khag and Sita Haran, a few miles away from Arizal in Beerwah district. An ancient temple dedicated to Sri Krishen is situated inside the Hari Parbat fort in Srinagar. The Dogra rular, Maharaja Partap Singh, built Sri Krishen temple, better known as Shri Gadadahar temple, at Shergari palace, on the banks of river Jehlum. Two large temples dedicated to Sri Ram, were built in Srinagar, in recent times, one on the left side of river Jehlum, Raghunath mandir, near Habakadal and other Ram mandir, at Sathu, Barbarshah. A temple known as the Radha Krishna is located in the Lok Bhawan complex at Anantnag.

SHIVA

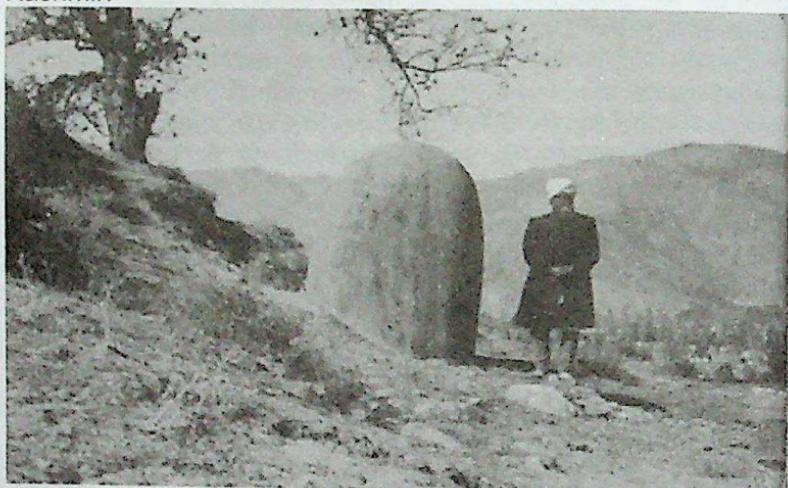
4

Shiva is worshipped in all temples of Kashmir in the form of Shiva-Linga. The *Linga* is the form, from which the cosmos arose, and into which the Hindus believe, it will dissolve eventually. The *Shiva Linga* is a symbol of Lord Shiva. Shiva has no form of His own and yet all forms are His forms. All forms are pervaded by Lord Shiva. The oldest available Sanskrit text on the worship of *Shivlinga* is the Linga Purana followed by the Shiva Mahapurana. The very first *Shloka* of section 2 of the Linga Purana, Part 1, says; "The non-characterized (formless) is the root of the characterized, (well formed) world. The manifest, characterized world, is called *Prakrti* (nature) must be seen in *Linga*, meaning mark, of Lord Shiva".

Swami Sivananda, founder of 'Divine Life Society', has said in his book, 'All About Hinduism'; "Linga represents the formless Shiva—*Shivalinga* speaks to you in the unmistakable language of silence, I am one without a second. I am formless....Linga is only the outward symbol of the formless being, Lord Shiva, who is the indivisible, all-pervading, eternal, auspicious, ever pure, immortal essence of His vast universe, who is the undying soul seated in

the chamber of your heart, who is your indweller, innermost Self or *Atman* and who is identical with the Supreme Brahman."

In Kashmir, we have nine Naths and nine Bhairvas, representing various forms of Lord Shiva. There are different temples dedicated to the forms of Shiva. Som Nath Mandir and Sheetal Nath Mandir are two important ancient temples in Srinagar. Sheetal Nath is said to be a Bhairva, but it does not fall in that category of *Asta- Bhairavas* of Kashmir. There are sixteen temples (Yars) on the bank of river Jehlum in Srinagar called Shuurah Yar, dedicated to Lord Shiva and Bhairvas. Ancient temple of Shiva, Sadashiva temple in Purshyar, on the banks of Jehlum, at Habakadal, Srinagar finds mention in the Puranas of Kashmir.



SHIVA LINGA, USHKAR GANESHA

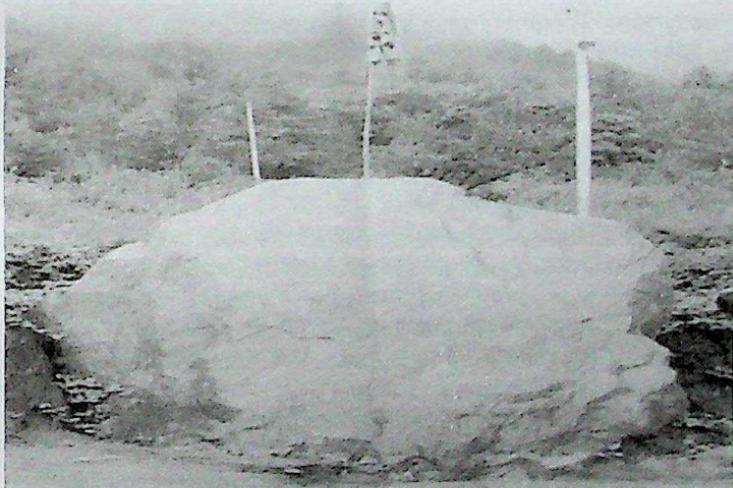
5

The worship of Lord Ganesha is common in Kashmir. Besides the temples specifically dedicated to Ganesh, the idols of Ganesha are installed in almost all temples. Every village and every village community has an image of Ganesha and one of many forms of Ganesha is found in every temple. A natural stone or *Svayambhu*, self-created Murti-image, is also an object of Ganesha worship.

Researcher Alice Getty wrote in 'Ganesha, a Monograph on the Elephant Faced God'; "The most celebrated *Svayambhu murtis* of Ganesha are found in Kashmir, where there are three famous and most powerful formless stones which from ancient times have drawn pilgrims to their shrines. One, which is near the village of Ganesh-bal, is in the river Lidar near its right bank and is still an

important place of pilgrimage....Another rock in Kashmir which has been worshipped from most ancient times as a symbol of Ganesha under the name of Bhimasvamin is at the foot of the hill Hari-Parbat near SrinagarThe most remarkable of these *Svayambhu murtis* in Kashmir is one on a cliff along the Krishen-Ganga known as Ganesh-Gati."

Ganesha, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is a God to whom every Hindu offers worship on every auspicious occasion. In any *Yajina*, first of all Ganesha is invoked and worshipped. He is the bestower of prosperity and remover of obstacles. He is the Lord of intelligence and wisdom. He is also the Lord of power and accomplishment. He is *Vighneswara*, Lord of obstacles. He is also called *Avighna*, remover of obstacles. He is called *Ganapati*, the leader of Shiva's celestial servants or *Ganas* and *Vinayaka*, the supreme leader. He is master of knowledge, *Vidya* and the champion of worldly achievements, *Avidya*. Among all the deities, Ganesha is the closest to the material plane of consciousness, most able to assist people in their lives.



GANESHA

BHAIRAVAS

6

In Vedantic tradition Bhairavas are attendants of Lord Shiva and are known as *Shivaganas* or *Bhutaganas*. In the Bhairava Tantra, Bhairava represents combination of three aspects of Lord Shiva; 'Bha' from *Bharena*, i.e, maintenance of the universe.'ra' from *revana* i.e, withdrawal of universe and 'va' from *Vatmana* i.e, letting go of universe. Thus, Bhairava represents three aspects of

Shiva; *Srshti*—manifestation, *Stehti*—maintenance and *Samhara*—withdrawal.

In Kashmiri tradition, it is believed that all Shiva Shastras were revealed by Lord Shiva, in the form of *Svachanada Bhairava* through his five faces. *Svachanada* in common parlance means *Svatantra* or the free will which is the keynote of Kashmir Shivism. Vasugupta founded the school of Trika philosophy. Later Kallata and Sommananda wrote explanatory notes on its aspects and developed a philosophical treatise on the same. The Trika and Shaivism in Kashmir are based on Tantras which have been classified as *Bhairava*, *Rudra* and *Shiva*. There are four schools of Shivaite philosophy; *Pratyabhigna*, *Karma*, *Kulla* and *Spanda*. Shiva's most significant aspect is as a guardian of directions. In his eightfold manifestations of *Astabhairavas*, *Bhairava* presides either alone or paired as consort with eight Mother Goddesses, over the spatio-ritual organization of sacred cities.

In Kashmir Shaivism, *Bhairava* Tantras are sixty-four in number. The scriptures of *Bhairava* Shastras are sixty-four in number. The total number of *Bhairavas* are sixty-four and there are sixty-four *Yoginis* also. The *Bhairavas* and *Yoginis* are associated with Tantric religious practices.

The Ashta Bhairavas of Kashmir are:

- (1) Anadeswar Bhairav. The temple is outside the *Akhara*, Maisuma, Srinagar.
- (2) Toshkraza Bhairav. The temple is at Narsingh Grah, Srinagar.
- (3) Bhokatkeshwar Bhairav. The temple at Chattabal, Srinagar, on the confluence of Dood Ganga and Vitasta. His birthday is celebrated in the month of *Chet*.
- (4) Puranraja Bhairav, Sathu, Barbarshah, Srinagar. His birthday is celebrated in *Baisakh*.
- (5) Vishek Sen Bhairav. The temple lies opposite Mahakali Mandir, beyond Zaina Kadal, Srinagar.
- (6) Nandkeshwar Bhairav, the temple is at Shadipur in village Sumbal.
- (7) Mangaleshwar Bhairav, is located in Brari Nambal area, of Srinagar. The shrine has stones of an old temple which is believed to have been built around 600 AD. As per Nilmat Puran, the area bears the name of Namchibal.
- (8) Vetalraj Bhairav. The temple is close to Dal Lake, Srinagar. The Vetalraj Bhairav is most powerful Bhairav. His birthday is celebrated twice a year, in the month of *Poh* and *Baisakh*.

PART V

THE PERSPECTIVE

The philosophical basis of the Hindu temple worship, the probable linkages between the Vedic people living along the legendary river Saraswati and the early Hindus of Kashmir, the description of the iconic forms worshipped in temples in Kashmir and the evolution of their architecture, bring to the surface, the fundamental unity, permeating the religious culture of the Sanskrit people of India. Nilmat Purana, the Mahatmayas, social and cultural data about history of the Hindus of Kashmir, made available in the Rajatarangni of Kalhan and Jonraj, the Agmas, and the scriptural literature of the Hindus of Kashmir including the Laugahsh Karma Kanda, represent a religious philosophy which is essentially Sanskrit in content. The Hindu temple worship in Kashmir, evolved as an integral aspect of temple worship in India.

The Shakta and Shiva Darshan are rooted in the Vedic tradition. The recognition of the basic unity of universal existence is fundamentally Vedic. Abhinavagupta, 960 AD, the greatest of the exponents of Shiva Darshan, whose, "philosophical and spiritual attainments were so high, that he was regarded Acharya of all Shiva schools, such as Siddhanta, Vama, Yamala, Bhairava, Kula, Trika and Ekavira," recognised the basic unity underlying the Hindu religious philosophy, of which Shiva Darshan formed an integral part. Abhinavagupta had attained spiritual greatness before he started writing his works extensively. He composed about forty works. *Tantraloka*, is the biggest in volume. It deals with all the matters of monistic Agamas, both in respect of philosophy and ritual.

Yograja in his commentary on Abhinava's *Paramartha Sara*, says, " that Abhinavagupta had attained the stage of oneness with Mahesvara, i.e. the stage of 'Bhairava', which is the same as 'Jivanmukta' in Vedic lore. He left a unique mark on the philosophical religious life in the country." Abhinavagupta, "left his mortal frames along with hundreds of his disciples" when he entered the sacred cave at Bheerwah and disappeared. While entering the cave, he recited verses from the Bhairva Stotra. The Bhairva Stotra of Abhinavagupta, reveals the Advaitic truth, which forms the foundation of the Shiva Darshan.

The English translation of the verses is given below;

- 1 "Having become one with Thee, I adore you in the heart of my heart. You are the first cause, of projection, sustenance and dissolution of the Universe and the protector of the destitute; everything sentient and unsentient stands pervaded by you; you are one with the self, one and only one without beginning and end;
2. By virtue of the power of your grace, I experience whole of this universe as one with Thee, and since you are always everyday of mine, whole of the (Universe) is nothing but myself;
- 3 Despite the fact that the forces of the agents of 'Karma' which are extremely terrifying, delusory and very difficult to resist are at work, there is no question of getting over-awed by them in the world, for mine own self, Thine ownself and the world have gained concurrence.
- 4 O, Ye, God of death! Don't cast your terrifying glance on me. By serving and remembering Lord Shiva, I have verily become the embodiment of the powers of the Bhairava.
- 5 All pervading darkness of ignorance is cut as under by the rays of your knowledge which is well-developed and verily one with you. O Ye! the destroyer of death and the God of death, I bow to Thee, I am not at all frightened by the malevolent spirits of Karma.
- 6 The rays of the truth and awareness have risen and pervaded all the categories and elements of this Universe. I have gained repose of senses by depending on the (divine) nector of Thine transcendentality.
7. O Lord ! When my mind falls a victim to such affliction as cause awful pain to my body, I being one with you, a shower of transcendental nectar in the form of hymns comes into being (which destroys the pangs of pain).
8. O Sankara ! It is true by observing fasts, giving charity and practicing austerity, afflictions are destroyed. But by concentrating on the supreme nector of your philosophy, a soothing stream flows in my mind.

9. After having attained your absolute glorified beauty--- a stage attained with great difficulty---- my awareness joyfully dances, sings and feels blissful.

The Bhairav Stotra, unfolds the secret of Atam-Janana, the conscious realization of the communion between the man and Paramatma. Abhinavgupta, gave expression to the Vedic truth, Lord Krishna, revealed to Arjuna in the Mahabhatta war. Svetasvatara Upnishad says;" He who at the beginning (of creation) projected Brahma (the Creator, the primal Universal Consciousness), and Who delivered unto Him the Vedas, seeking liberation, I go for refuge into that Effulgent One, whose light turns the Understanding towards the (infinite) Atman." Abhinavgupta wrote a commentary on Bhagwat Gita.

The study of the Hindu temples of Kashmir, provides a perspective of Hindu religion and practice as it has evolved through centuries of the history of Hindu Kashmir. It provides an insight into the basic unity of Hindu religious culture of India. The Hindu religious culture is Sanskrit in content. The temples in Kashmir and their ruins stand an eloquent testimony to their Sanskrit identity.

FOOT NOTES

1.DEVI

"We bow before You, Sri Devi, Who are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous and ill-fortune in those of the vicious, intelligence in the hearts of the good and modesty in the hearts of the high-born. May You protect the Universe! How can we describe Your inconceivable form, or Your abundant surpassing valour that destroys the 'asuras', or Your wonderful feats displayed in battles among all the hosts of Gods 'asuras' and others? You are the origin of all the worlds! You are incomprehensible even to 'Vishnu,' 'Shiva' and others. You are dispassionate. You are the resort of all. This entire world is composed of an infinitesimal portion of Yourself. You are the supreme primordial Prakriti untransformed.
(Devi Mahatmyam, Durga Saptasati, Markandeya Purana.)

2.BRAHMA

While Vedic gods had no form, post-Vedic period gods have been given different forms depending upon the attributes of individual god which is depicted by different symbols and forms. Brahma is a post-Vedic deity, who is not mentioned in Vedas, but, emerged as a great God during the Puranic age. During the Vedic period, Prajapti, Vacaspati, Brahmanaspati, Dhata, Visvakarman and Vidhata resembled the personality of 'Brahma' and later, some merged in Him. Brahma is very much associated with lotus. He is born from a lotus, which is grown in the navel of Vishnu. Secondly, He sits on lotus-seat. According to the 'Vishnudharmottara-Purana', the lotus, which rises from the navel of Vishnu, represents the earth. The pericap of the lotus stands for the Meru Mountain as symbol of steadiness. Bramaha sits on such type of lotus in His 'Padmasana' posture and meditates. In meditation, He thinks of His highest state (Parama Dharama), which is formless (Rupahina).

3.VISHNU

Vishnu's name is derived from 'Vish' which literally means 'to spread in all directions, or to pervade'. So Vishnu is that deity whose existence is in the whole universe. He is the Pervader. He is everywhere. He is also called Narayan. It consists of two words. 'Nara' means water and 'ayan' means house or the dwelling place. Thus, Narayan literally means 'he who has water as his dwelling place'. According to our scriptures, Lord Vishnu, is reposing on the snake coil formed over the surface of sea. So, Vishnu is where water is existing. Scientifically, where there is water there is life and there is world. According to Padam Purana, "Sri Hari should be worshipped in 'Salagrama', 'Mani', 'Yantra', 'Mandala' or image form."

4.SHIVA

Adi Acharya Shankara notes in Shiva-Pancakshara Nakshatramala, "Obeisance to Shiva, the dweller of Kailasha. Be pleased to grant me a boon." Shiva is the most auspicious name of God. It itself means 'The Auspicious'. Shiva, the formless, appears in many forms in order to bestow His grace on His devotees. The Supreme God who is the source of auspiciousness (Shambhu), who does what is auspicious (Shankara) is auspiciousness itself (Shiva). Shiva is the saviour of souls, the giver of all that is good. His grace confers on the soul the highest good, 'Moksha.'

The greatest Kashmiri Saint-Poetess Lal Ded said;
'I wearied myself seeking my Lord.
I exhausted myself searching for him in this place and that I laboured for
Him beyond my strength.
I strove for Him beyond my endurance. Finally, I arrived at his door and
found that bolts were pulled across.
I gazed at the door with eyes of love.
The bolts slipped back and my Lord revealed himself to me'.

The great Kashmiri Bakhti-poet Pandit Krishnajoo Razdan was greatly influenced by the Shiva philosophy of Kashmir, he emphasized that Bhakti is Shakti itself. For the sake of liberation, Shakti becomes Bhakti in the mind of the devotee. The Shivaite call it Shaktipata. Through Shaktipata a sadhaka begins his journey. He said:

*"My boat is caught in a raging storm,
Rocked by waves in the midst of the ocean of existence,
And You alone can take me across,
This world is a vast and turbulent ocean,
Shore-less and impossible to cross,
Take me into Your lap,
O Shambhu, take pity on me."*

5.GANESHA

Lord Ganapati's two powers are the 'Kundalini' and the 'Vallabha' or power of love. He sits contentedly upon the 'Muladhara Chakra'. This Chakra controls the forces of memory within every creature. Worship of Him strengthens memory and brings knowledge from the within. Lord Ganapati, is the embodiment of 'Buddhi' and 'Jnana' or wisdom. Truth emerges out of wisdom and ultimately leads to 'Ananda' or bliss.

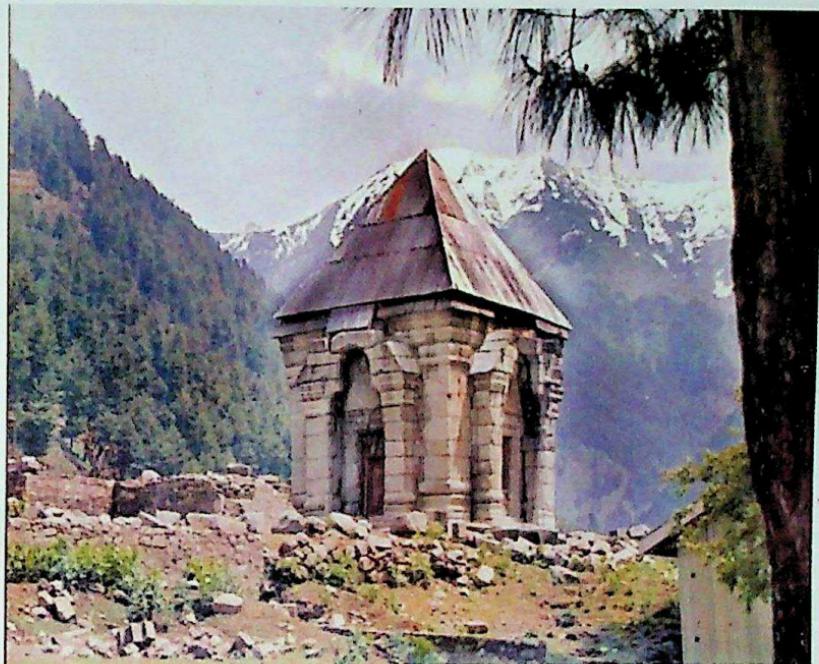
Every Hindu village and community has an image of the 'Lord Ganesha' and one of the many forms of Ganesha, is found in every temple. A natural stone, or 'Svayambhu' (self-created) 'murti' is also an object of Ganesh worship

6.BHAIARVAS:

The concept of 'Bhairavas' in Kashmir came during the rule of king Praversen II in sixth century, who desired to build a new city of his own and give his name to it. Actually he was residing in the city of his grandfather, i.e, Purandhara, which was prone to floods, fires and epidemics. He worshipped his Isht Dev, Vetal Bhairav. Bhairava means the terrible one, for help and guidance. With His blessings, the king laid the foundation of the new city and divided the city of Srinagar into eight zones, which were presided over by the respective Bhairavas. Temples were constructed in their names. These Bhairavas were regarded as the protectors of their respective areas. The influence of the Bhairavas is still prevailing in religious, cultural and folk tales of Kashmiri Hindus. They frequently visit Bhairava temples to seek their blessings.

All Bhairavas are Shiv-Parvati's attendants. Bhairava worship bestow *Bhairava Siddi* to the devotee and helps him to gain priority with lord Shiva. Bhairavas have usually chosen a tree for its dwelling place in Kashmir and Mulberry or Chinar trees are often seen at Bhairava Temples.

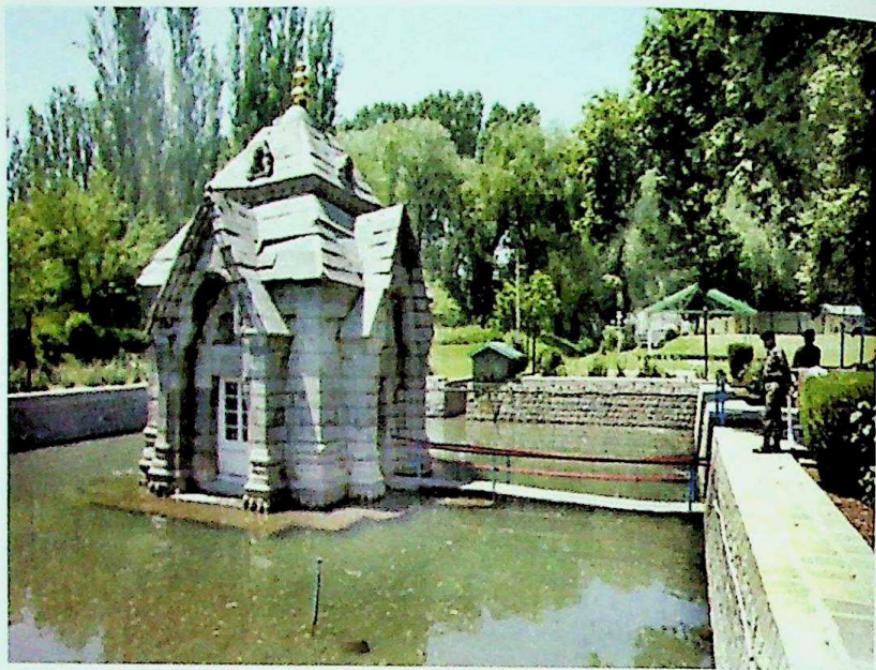
English rendering of Bhairva Stotra of Abhinavgupta is by K.L.Swaroop.



WANGATH TEMPLE



LOUDV TEMPLE



PANDRETHAN TEMPLE



PANDRETHAN SCULPTURES

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT STONE TEMPLES OF KASHMIR

WANGATH TEMPLES

1

Kalhana notes in Rajatarangini, that the town of Srinagri was built by Emperor Ashoka, in the third century BC. His son Jalauka, 220 BC, built Shaivite temples, Bhutesvara and Jyestharudra and *Muthas* in the Wangath valley, around the holy spring of Naran Nag, at Buthser.

Wangath (Vangat), is a village situated about forty-eight kilometers north-west of Srinagar. Wangath is the ancient Vashisth Ahsram, named after Sage Vashistha. He, as per tradition, stayed here while consecrating the *Linga* called Jyestharudra at Naran Nag. In Nilmat Purana, Lord Shiva says to Nandi; "You shall live in my company in a place at a distance of one *Yojana* from here towards east. O Nandi, the gifted sage Vashistha on the earth shall erect your image and also mine at that place."



WANGHT TEMPLE RUINS

There is a spring at Wangath, which is known as Naran Nag. In ancient times, this spring was known as Sodara Nag. Around Naran Nag, a complex of temple-ruins is spread. These

ruins are known as Wangath temples. The Wangath temples were built in three groups, around the same time as Sankaracharya temple at Srinagar and Bumazuv temple near Mattan on Srinagar-Pahalgam road, were built.

According to Harmukat-Ganga Mahatmya, the particular region around the spring of Sodara Nag was also known as Bhutesvara or Shiva Bhutesha---the lord of beings. The entire area is clad with dense forests. Roaring stream of Kanaknai or Karanknadi flows to the south of Sodara *Tirtha*. It is formed of the tributaries, which flow out from the sacred Nund Kol and Gangabal lakes. The Nilmata Purana, describes the spiritual merits of taking a bath in Sodara Nag. It says that a bath in Sodara Nag has a purifying effect on soul and body.

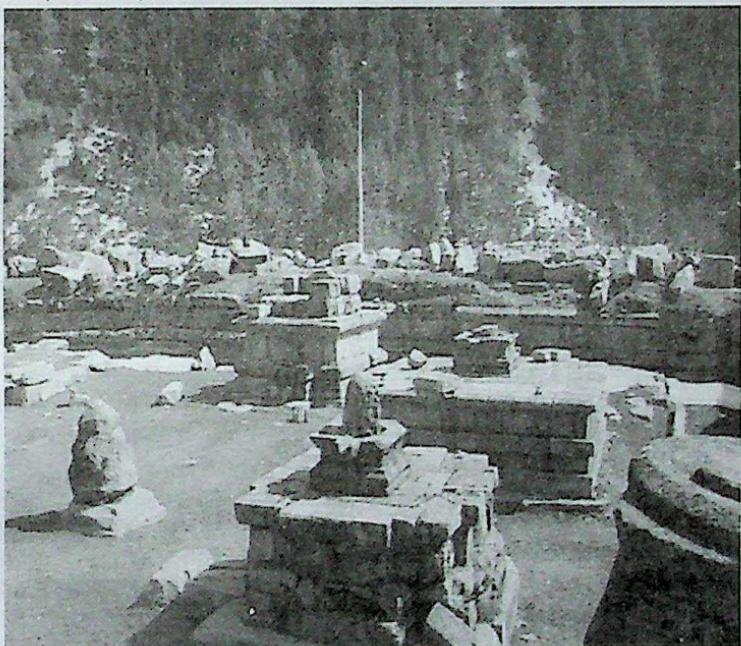
Bishop Crowie and Major Cole have identified the ruins of seventeen temple structures of various ages and dimensions at Buthser, near Wangath, distributed in two distinct groups; the first, on the western side and second on the eastern side. Each group was enclosed by a separate stone-wall, a short distance away from each other. The temples in the eastern group were known as Rajadainbal. The main temple was dedicated to Shiva-Butesvara. The temple complex on western side, known as Nagbal, had the main temple of Shiva-Jyestharudra.

The first group of six temples, is situated within an enclosure wall. The principal temple is a square of twenty-five feet, it has two entrances opposite each other in the north-east and south-west sides. It has domed ceiling and core of the roof consists of rubble-stone masonry in lime. The interior measures seventeen feet square. In the centre of the floor is square space, which is unpaved. It marks the site of the pedestal of the image. The two sides, which are closed, are decorated externally with square-topped recesses, each of which contains the pedestal of an image which was probably a replica of the one in the sanctum itself. Eternally the roof is pyramidal. This temple has been identified by Stein, as Shiva-Jyestharudra.

The small temple, to the left possesses niches on the three sides. The temple immediately touching the porch of the preceding shrine is a single square structure, plain both internally and externally. Behind this is a basement of another small temple. Its super-structure has fallen down. Of the two temples behind, one has its entrance facing south-east and the other faces north-east.

The second group of temples is situated about two hundred yards farther off. It is enclosed in a massive rectangular stone wall pierced by a two-chambered gateway. Inside the wall are six structures in ruins and partly buried under the ground. The largest temple has a seventeen feet square base internally, and is similar to the largest temple in the first group. This temple has been identified by Stein, as Shiva-Bhutesvara.

Between the two groups of temples are number of structures of third group. An impressive rectangular cistern, almost eighteen feet long, hammered out of a huge boulder, is nearby. Besides, there are remains of a building of a special type, measuring one hundred twenty feet by seventy feet with a height of ten feet. Along with the sides of this structure are over thirty monolithic bases or piers at regular intervals of about twelve feet. It is evident that this was a pillared pavilion.



WANGHAT TEMPLE RUINS

The Wanghat temples are dedicated to Shiva-Bhutesa and Shiva-Ugresa. Close to the temple of Shiva Bhutesha are the remains of the ruins of the temple dedicated to Bhairava and Matrachakra, seven mothers. Matrachakra, or *Saptamatrika* represents divine energies, which maintain balance in the universe by combating the evil and upholding the good.

According to a legend, Shiva liberated Parvati, Jyestha, from *daityas* here and on marrying her took the name of Jyesthesa. In the Jyestharudra temple of Wangath, Shiva is worshipped as *linga*. Nilmata Purana mentions, that the consecration and the first worship of the Jyestharudra *linga* is distinctly attributed to Rishi Vashistha. *Linga* was worshipped here under the name of Svayambhuh i.e. natural stone and not sculptured one. Cowie identified the base of a giant *Linga* at the south-west corner of the enclosure.

There are three sites in Kashmir, where Shiva Jyesthesa was worshipped under this name or equivalents of Jyesthesvara and Jyestharudra. These are Mount Harmukh, near Tripuresvara, modern Triphar, i.e. between Mahadev and Suresvar and in the close neighbourhood of Srinagar. The similar Lingas are worshipped at Sharika (Hari) Parvat and Suresvari.

Many Hindu kings of Kashmir, from time to time, raised temples at Wangath, around Naran Nag. The earliest evidence about the shrine goes back to 253 BC, when king Narendraditya I, alias Khimkhila was ruling Kashmir. He consecrated shrines of Shiva Bhutesvara and founded a permanent endowment for feeding of Brahmans. His Guru Ugra constructed shrines of Shiva Ugresha and Matrachakra.

According to Rajatarngini, king Jaluka, 137 BC, erected a stone temple at Nandiksetra for Shiva Bhutesa and offered precious stones and other wealth to the temple. The offerings of flowers made of precious metals and stones are mentioned in various Shiva *Paddhatis* still in use in Kashmir. This temple has been identified with Shiva-Bhutesvara temple of Wangath.

Lalitaditya Muktagipa, on return from his victorious expeditions, presented a huge sum of his war booty, as an offering to the shrine. He erected a lofty stone temple of Shiva Jyestharudra in close proximity to the shrine at Wangath and also made a grant of land and villages. King Avantivarman made a pedestal with silver conduit for bathing of sacred image (*Snadanroni*).

CHAKRADHARA TEMPLE

2

According to Kalhana there were four famous ancient shrines; Chakradhara, Vijayesvara, Adikesava and Isana in Kashmir. Of the four shrines, the sites of only two have been located so far. The location of Chakradhara shrine, a Vishnu temple, was established

by Prof. George Buhler, at Chakdar Udar, west of Bijbehara. The Shiva shrine of Vijayesvara, situated near Bijbehara, was located by Sir Aurel Stein. The sites of Vishnu temple, of Adikeseva and Shiva temple, of Isana have not been identified.

Bijbehara, old Vejeshvara, is situated some sixty kilometers from Srinagar, and nearby is the village Semthan, originally Simhasthana i.e, the place of tigers. Near this village, there is a hillock known as Chakdar, old Chakardhara. The famous historian, Jonaraja, has said that a Vishnu temple existed there. It has been mentioned in Nilmata Purana and Vitasta Mahatmaya also. Chakradhara was dedicated to the worship of Vishnu.

Charadbara was the most sacred shrine of ancient days. It is mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Mankha's Srikantachartti, Jonaraja's Dwitiya-Rajatarangini, Jaydratha's Haracaritacintamani and other temporal treatises of Kashmir. Aurel Stein, in his critical and annotated edition of Kalhan's Rajatarangini, has made significant comments; "There can be no doubt that at the foot of the Chakradhara Udar there stood once an ancient town of considerable importance. From the low ground towards the river and from riverbed itself, ancient coins reaching back to Greek and Indo-Scythian rule are annually extracted in considerable quantities. This tradition existed already in the time of Kalhana who records it in the interesting legend of Narapura."

Legend says that a spring of sweet water was in a grove at Chakradhara. It was the habitat of Naga Susravas, the tutelary deity of the city. Visakha, a young Brahman, had found an occasion to assist Susravas and his two daughters, Iravati and Chandralekha, when they were hungry. As a reward for his selfless service, the Naga allowed Chandralekha to marry Visakha. The couple lived happily in Narapura, until the beauty of the Naga lady infatuated king Nara. Both husband and wife frustrated the lewd designs of the monarch. The rebuffed royal suitor, therefore, ordered her abduction. However, before this could be carried out, the couple made good their escape and sought shelter in the sanctuary of Susravas. When the tutelary deity of Narapura heard of this outrage, he became blind with rage and sallied forth from his pool. "Having caused a blinding darkness originating from fearful thundering clouds," writes Kalhana, "he burnt down the king together with the city." Thousands of people, who had sought refuge in Chakradhara shrine, were also burnt. Kalhana further writes, "that the tale of Nemesis is still vividly

recollected by the people, when they behold the ruins at Narapura and dry spring of Susravas."

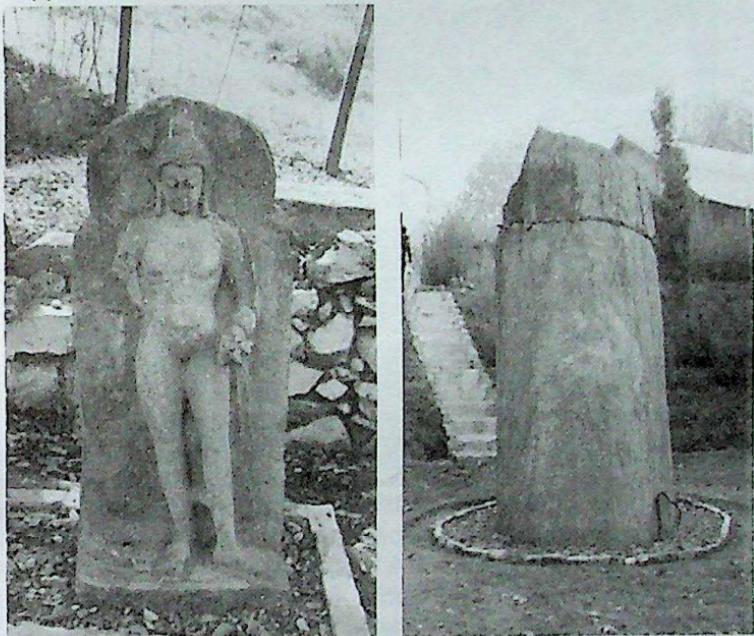
Aurel Stein writes, "Whatever the origin of the legend may have been, it is clear that popular tradition in Kalhan's time looked upon the barren ground which stretches along the river between Tsakardar and the present Vijabror (Bijbehara) as the site of an ancient city. The ruins which in the twelfth century were pointed out as the remains of the burned Narapura, may have supplied the immediate starting point of the legend. What those remains were we cannot say. At the ground referred, it is possible that the remains might have since disappeared under alluvial deposits. The habitation of the Susram Naga was still shown to me by Mohammedan peasants in a generally dry hollow close to the south-east foot of the Udar. The name of Narapura and its kind are no longer remembered. But the main features of the legend, as heard by Kalhana, still live in local tradition." Stein further writes, "At the northern end of the Chakdar Udar, however, which is separated from the rest by a dip in the ground, the outlines of a quadrangular enclosure about forty yards square, can still be traced in regular rows of hollows. These hollows may possibly be the last indications of the wooden ramparts which enclosed the shrine." Jonaraja observes, Sultan Sikandar broke the image of Vishnu, worshipped in the Chakradara temple. This was corroborated by Stein also in his findings.

PANDRETHAN TEMPLE

Panderthan is situated five kilometers, south-east of Srinagar, on the river bank. The name has been derived from ancient Puranadhisthana, which literally means old capital. Puranadhisthana witnessed considerable building activities during the region of Pravarasena-I, of Gnandiya dynasty. The king constructed a temple of Pravaresvara, Shiva together with Ashta-Matrika, eight mothers, and consecrated various shrines at the capital. Kalhana describes that Meruardhana, minister of Partha of the Utpala dynasty, built a temple of Meruvardhanasavamin here. The other temple of Shiva-Rilhanesvara, was built by Rilhana, the minister of King Jayasima, in the year 1135AD.

The ancient temple, now standing at Pandrethan, is a small stone temple standing in a tank of forty square yards with water about four feet deep and the plinth of the temple remains submerged almost throughout the year. The water comes from a spring on the northern side. This temple is made of ashlar stone

masonry. It stands on a fairly high platform. The face of the latter has a set of projected mouldings at the base and at the top, the receding middle portion being plan. The temple proper, above the platform, is Tri-ratha on plan externally, but square internally. It measures seventeen feet six inches square externally. It is mandapa type i.e, open on all the four sides. All the central projections provide each a door-opening. The roof is usual pyramidal type. The interior of the cell is plain, except for the ceiling, which is one of the best examples of carving on stone extant in Kashmir. It consists of nine stones arranged in three overlapping squares, each of which cuts off the angles of the square below it, and thus reduces the extent of the space to be covered. The twelve triangles so formed have been utilized for figure decoration. The walls of temple rest on a projecting member relieved with fore parts of a series of squatting elephants, which support the load of the structure



PANDRETHAN TEMPLE SCULPTURE AND SHIVA LINGA

The entire ceiling is perched on a corbelled course running on all sides. This corbelled course, which projects inwards and is decorated with a series of flowers within squarish compartments is supported by a horizontal row of brackets projecting from the course below. The course below the brackets is also corbelled and projects inwards beyond the plumb of the vertical walls of the

sanctum. The load over the ceiling is relieved by the provision of a shallow pyramidal chamber above the ceiling. There is no access to this blind chamber which is closed on all sides by the facing slabs of the pyramidal roof of the temple. While the sills of the doors are absolutely plain, the jambs, made of ashlar courses, are faceted. The monolithic lintel, also faceted, presents a central frieze with seven arched niches, badly defaced. The floor of the cell is paved with stone flags. In the centre is the depression about seven feet square, which must have held the pedestal of the image worshipped in the temple.



PANDRETHAN TEMPLE SCULPTURE

Despite the modest dimensions of the temple, it is one of the few temples, which preserve the major portion of the roof and furnishes a fairly good idea about what the roof of the great temples looked like before their destruction. When William Moorcroft, George Trebeck, G.T.Vigne and A.Cunningham paid visits to Pandrethan in the first half of the nineteenth century, all structures had been reduced to shapless ruins with the exception of the temple. Judging by the large masses of stones on the slopes at the foot of the spur, pieces of sculptures and some enormous 'Lingas', G.T.Vinge, confirmed the existence of a city and a vast Hindu temple-complex. Around this site a number of Hindu images have been found. A.Cingham also noticed ancient

remains, consisting of numerous carved stones, architectural fragements, old walls and pottery, extending for a long strecth of five kilometers. He published a drawing of a lofty colossal *Linga* (reduced to fragments) relieved with four busts found on the top of a flat spur opposite the village of Lajan, at a small distance of from the temple.

NARASTAN TEMPLE

Narastan is situated in the district of Pulwama, forty kilometers from Srinagar. There is a stone temple in Narastan. The stone temple, with the exception of the roof, is also well preserved and possesses several interesting features. It is built on a single square base and consists of four instead of five courses of stone. It has triangular canopies, sunken trefoil niches and the enclosure wall with a prominent gateway. The temple, has novel treatment of the trefoil arches on the exterior of the shrine walls, the lower trefoil encloses a deeply recessed niche, whereas the upper arch is so shallow that it projects only two inches from the plain wall surface. Internally, the temple is a square cell eight feet six inches, with plain walls except for a string-course at a height of seven feet six inches from the floor. The temple faces south is reached from the courtyard by a flight of four steps.

The square courtyard is seventy feet and is surrounded by a wall which is un-ornamented and has a small opening from the south western side of the enclosure. In front of the temple stairs is a square tank about eight feet wide and over two feet deep. From the tank a drain conducts the water to a chamber in the south-eastern corner of the enclosure wall, before its final exist from the temple yard.

Narastan was an important centre where idols of various Hindu deities where sculpted during the Hindu period. It is said, that these images were then sent from here to India. The hard and coloured stones from which these beautiful and astounding images of the Gods were crafted, can still be found in the stream flowing nearby.

MARTAND TEMPLE

3

There are very few Sun temples in India. The most important Sun temple is Konark in Orissa. Modhera in Gujarat and Katarmal in Almora, Uttra Khand, are equally important. Other prominent Sun temples are Surya Pahar at Goalpura in Assam,

Suryanarayana at Arasavalli in Andhra Pradesh, Suryanaar Koyil in Tamil Nadu and Dakshinarka at Gaya. The Sun temple in Kashmir at Martand is unique, magnificent and an architectural marvel. Martand is one of the earliest and yet largest of the Kashmiri stone temples known to have a chain of pillars. On its right and left are some rooms meant for meditation. In the central temple, the images are desecrated and broken, but the central portion is exquisitely grand beyond description. Martand is a wonder in stone and represents the architectural style of ancient Kashmir.



MARTAND TEMPLE RUINS

According to Hardy Henery Cole, Martand temple was built by Samdha Arya 35 BC. Some believe that it was the Raja Ramdev of Pandva dynasty who first built the original temple devoted to Sun. Many subsequent kings repaired and renovated the temple complex. The remains at Martand probably date from the period of Lalitadita. Rajatarangini is quite explicit on the subject, for in the section on Lalitadita it states; "That liberal king built the wonderful, shrine of Martanda, with its massive walls of stone within a lofty enclosure." Prasadantar, further reveals that the temple was dedicated to the deity Sun, Surya who is called Martanda in the text. Other rectangular panels contain sitting groups, floral scrolls, pair of geese etc.

Martand is situated about sixty four kilometers to the south-east of Srinagar. The temple dedicated to the Sun, is the most perfect construction with high technical accomplishments. The proper temple is sixty three feet in length by thirty six feet in width at the eastern end. The width at the entrance end is only twenty seven feet. It consists of a courtyard with principal shrine in the

middle and a colonnaded peristyle. The latter is 220 feet long and 142 feet wide. It has eighty four fluted columns facing the courtyard. It has a huge courtyard, with the main temple in the centre.



MARTAND TEMPLE SCLUPTURES

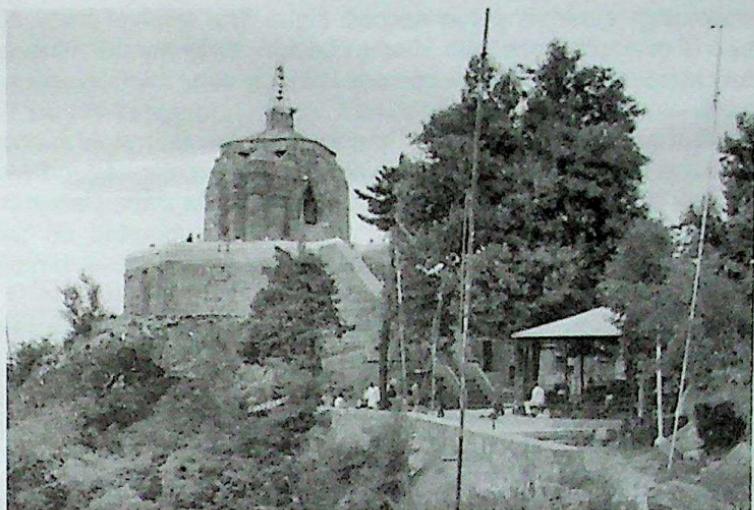
The central temple is sixty-three feet in length and thirty-six feet in width. The temple, about forty feet high, stands on a huge rock. The peristyle is externally plain, except on the west side. In the main shrine, there are three distinctive chambers; the Mandapa, the Antaral and the Garbhagriha. The first chamber is open and highly decorated. The middle chamber is also decorated in the same fashion. The inner chamber is plain and is closed on three sides. The walls of the temple are nine feet thick. Another distinctive feature is the imposing gateway, as imposing as the main shrine. The entrance, or the gateway, stands in the middle of the western side of quadrangle, and is of the same width as the temple itself. It was open to east and west and was divided into distinct portions forming an inner and outer portico, by a cross wall with a doorway in the centre. On each flank of the gateway, the pediment was supported by massive fluted pillars, about seventeen feet in height. One of these is still standing to the south of the entrance. The walls of the gateway are profoundly decorated internally and externally, the chief motif of decoration being rows of double pedimented niches. Although, most of these niches contain single standing figures of Gods, but a tall figure of the three-headed Vishnu, standing between two attendants, is there in the two large niches in the side walls of the inner chamber of the gateway. There are also six subsidiary shrines in the courtyard.

Martand is a sacred place for Hindus. It is believed that thirteenth Sun, Martand was born here. The legend says, that of the two wives Kashyap Rishi had, Ditti gave birth to Danvas and Aditti bore him thirteen sons of whom first twelve became the rulers of Surya Loka, in rotation with the twelve months of the year. Between the two, legend says, Aditti was pious and spiritually inclined who spent most of her time in religious rituals and prayers. It is believed, that because of her religious disposition, Lord Vishnu, blessed her with a boon that she would become the mother of thirteen sons. However, when she was pregnant with her thirteenth son, she did not stop the ritual of fasting much to the displeasure of Kashyap Rishi. This led to premature birth of the thirteenth son, who resembled an Andkar Pind or oval-shaped structure like an egg, but glowing like a sun. Using her spiritual powers, Aditti dropped it in the depths of Satisar lake. Later, when Kashyap Rishi came to know that his son lay in the depths of Satisar he called upon Lord Bramha to accompany him to Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati and Lord Vishnu. Later, all of them went to the place where the lifeless egg or Mrit-aend was dropped. There Lord Shiva smote the Mrit-aend, the upper side became Wemal and the lower side became Kemal. A spark of energy ignited out of it, which turned into Goddess Barga Shakha, worshipped on the hillock overlooking the shrine. Three more Shakti Swaroopni Jyotis became famous as Beema, Baswati and Bhavani, all worshipped there to this day. The legend says, that the light that ignited out of the Mrit-aend became Martand and by virtue of the Chakra the stream that gushed out from there became Chakarsuta or Chaka Nadi. At the foot of the Martand, Kereva is the original shrine of Martanda. The shrine is marked by two springs, Wemal and Kemal. The Goddess blessed the fish therein and ordained that those who will take care of the fish will attain salvation. The springs are full of fish, but nobody ever has touched them. Water, which comes out in the form of a canal, is called Chaka Nadi. Kashmiri Hindus and Hindus from Northern belt visit this place to perform the last rites of their deceased.

SHANKARACHARYA TEMPLE

4

One of the oldest and famous stone temples of Lord Shiva in Kashmir is the Shankaracharya temple. It is located in the heart of the Srinagar city, on a hilltop about one thousand feet above the ground level, overlooking the Dal Lake.



SHANKARACHARYA TEMPLE

The temple was originally built by King Sandhiman of the Gonanda Dynasty. He gave the name, Jyeshteshwara and the hillock, Sandhiman Parbat. According to Aurel Stein, King Gopaditya repaired the temple and the hillock was re-named, Gopadari or Gopa Hill. He donated two villages, the present Gupkar and Buchwara for the maintenance of the temple. King Lalitaditya repaired it again. However, the name of the temple remained unchanged.

The Shiva temple is a massive stone structure built on a high octagonal plinth about thirty feet high. The plinth is surmounted by a low parapet wall about twenty four feet long on each side, the inner surface of which was originally adorned by a range of eighty four round headed recesses enclosed in rectangular panels. The greater part of the wall has now fallen. The shrine consists of a cell, circular inside, with a diameter of thirteen feet. Externally it is square with two projecting facets on each side. The surface is plane, except for the salient and re-entering angles of the facets. The thickness of the walls in the middle of each facet is about eight feet. The basement is of thirteen layers of stone and is about twenty feet high on the solid rock. The square building of the temple is supported by the basement. It has eighty four recesses on its exterior and is surrounded by a parapet enabling devotees to have the *Parikrama* of the temple. The stairs leading to sanctum sanctorum number thirty six, first flight of eighteen steps followed by twelve steps and again followed by six steps on either side of

the landing terminating the second flight. The total of thirty six steps is in accordance with Hindu tradition, thirty six denoting as many elements of which the cosmos is made.

To the north of the base is a low cell ten feet eight inches square, entered through a plain and nearly circular-headed low doorway. The ceiling is flat and built of plain stone slabs placed on long stone joints, which rest on long beams supported on two octagonal columns. To the south-east of the temple base, slightly lower down the hill, is a tank ten feet square.



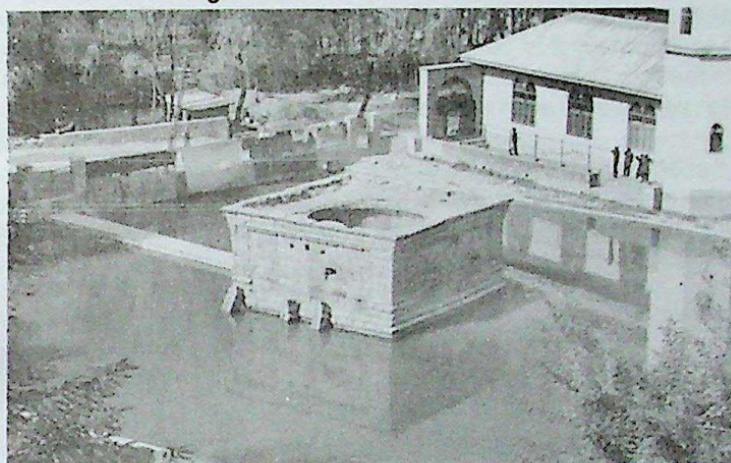
TEMPLE SHIVLINGA AT SHANKARACHARYA

The original Shiva Lingam in the temple, along with over three hundred precious idols of Gods and Goddesses therein and other structures around the temple, were destroyed by Sultan Sikandar who ruled Kashmir. It was repaired during the Sikh rule. Latter it was repaired by Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the second Dogra ruler of Kashmir.

The temple was originally connected with the river Jhelum near the temple of Goddess Tripurasundari on its right bank known as Shudashyar Ghat by a finely sculptured stone stair up to the top of the hill. Emperor Jehangir dismantled this flight of steps and the stones were used by his queen, Noor Jehan, to build a huge mosque, known as Pathar Masjid. Sunni Muslims never used this mosque for prayers because a Shia woman had built it.

LODUV TEMPLE

5



LODUV TEMPLE COMPLEX

The temple at Loduv is situated twenty kilometers from Srinagar. It is in the midst of a spring. It exhibits some of the very typical Kashmiri features such as trefoil niche, lantern ceiling and an elevated platform. This temple which is internally circular and externally square stands in the middle of a tank fed by a natural spring. It is a plain and a square walled structure. The construction style is simple, circular in plan internally with a diameter seventeen feet six inches and twenty four feet square externally. It is devoid of any decorations. At a height of nearly ten feet from the ground level is a plain projecting string-course over which springs the domical ceiling. It has a single opening, the entrance, which is on the south-west side and is arched at the top. There is a torus course at the base. The water of the spring is shallow.

Behind this temple, higher up on the hill is a smaller temple, which externally presents the same appearance as the larger temple. Internally, this temple is six feet square. The ceiling

consists of three courses of overlapping stones. There is a base for the image in the centre. The image in the temple has been lost.

DRANG TEMPLE

Drang is a small village situated at a distance of about four kilometers from Tangmarg, where the Firozpor-Nalla issues from the mountains into the open ground. There is a small temple, in the village, which is in ruins. A peristyle, no part of which, except the double-chambered gateway, is now extant above ground, probably surrounded it. The temple faces north-east. The roof has fallen in. Internally it is eleven feet square. The gateway measures fifteen feet six inches. Externally, the temple is similar to Narastan temple, ceiling also seems to be of the same type.

Ascending the spur, at whose foot these ruins are situated, there is an open ground in the midst of dense forest. Among the trees at one corner of the ground are the scanty remains of the base of another small temple.



DRANG TEMPLE

KAPTESVARA TEMPLE KOTHAR

6

Kothar is situated about two miles above Achabal on the Kashtwar road. The name of the village is derived from Kapatesvara, Shiva. There is a sacred circular spring at Kother and two small temples stand adjacent to it. In ancient times, the

temple complex was known as *Papasudana tirtha*. The holy spring was known as *Papasudana*, which literally means remover of sins.

The larger temple measures eight feet four inches internally and faces south-west. Its roof has been destroyed and the entrance is about four feet by six feet. The smaller temple measures about six feet internally and faces west. Its lower part is buried underground. There is a stretch of wall about twenty four feet long and twelve feet wide round the temples and the tank. The fragment, above ground on the east side shows that the surrounding wall is in reality a cellular peristyle. The top stones of cells are visible.

Within the sanctuary of *Papasudana*, Lord Shiva is worshipped under an appellation of *Kapatesvara*. According to legend, Shiva manifested himself here in the disguise of floating pieces of wood (*Kapata*), therefore, it is also known as *Kapatesvara tirtha*. The holy *tirtha* has a large pond fed by the water of the *Papasudana* spring, enclosed by a massive stone wall. The appearance of the pieces of wood in the pond in Vaisaka is deemed auspicious as the divine *Darshan* of Lord Mahadeva under the appellation of *Kapatesvara*.

The annual pilgrimage to this *tirtha* takes place on the third day of *Vaisakha Suhukla Paksha*. The main festival is known as *Akshay Tritiya (Achhan Trey)*.

Kalhana gives elaborate details of this *tirtha* in *Rajatarangini* thus; "Papasudana is the famous Kutehari spring of Kashmir and a place of pilgrimage near village Kothar in Kuthar Paragana." He further mentions, that; "Where within the sanctuary of Papasudana those who touch the husband of Uma in the wooden form secure as a reward the pleasures of life and liberation." Raja Bhoj of Malwa, remitted heaps of gold to Raja Anant (1028-1063) of Kashmir, had through him caused the construction of a pool at Kaptesvara in Kuthar Paragana. The stone basin built by him still exists.

GOSWAMI GUND ASHRAM

Goswami Gund Ashram is situated twelve kilometers from Anantnag township. It has a lotus spring, a Shiva temple and a few *Dharamshallas* for devotees, established by a great Kashmiri saint Swami Totakak.

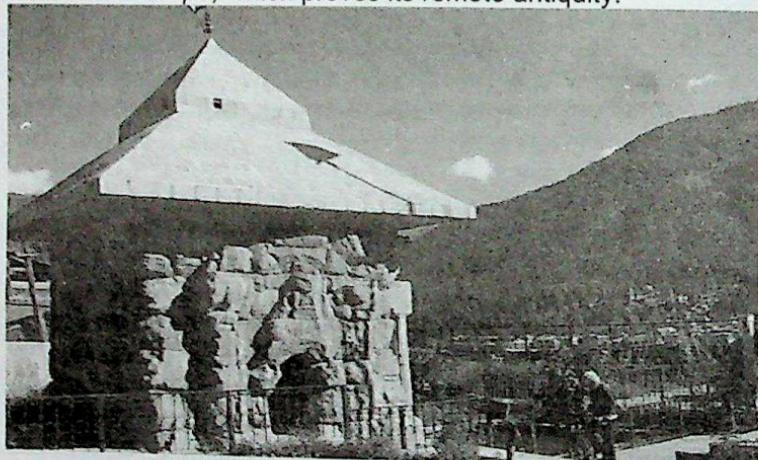
NAGDANDI ASHRAM

Nagdandi Ashram also known as Ramakrishna Ashram is situated on a hillock near Achabal, Anantnag. It was built by Swami Ashoka Nanda about 300 years back. There is a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and an Ashram with beautiful surroundings. It is famous for *Yoga Sadhana*.

MAMALESHWARA TEMPLE

7

Pahalgam is situated ninety six kilometers from Srinagar, at a height of seven thousand feet above sea level, at the confluence of Lidder, originally Lamboder and Sheshnag streams. Pahalgam also serves as the base camp for pilgrims to the holy shrine of Amarnath. About three kilometers from here, in the Lidder valley, at the village Mammal, originally Mamlaka, is an ancient temple of Lord Shiva. It is called Mamaleshwara and is made of sculptured stones. The original *Linga* of the temple was consecrated to Shiva Mamaleshwara according to Kalhana. This temple is mentioned in *Amreshvarakalpa*, which proves its remote antiquity.



MAMLESHWAR TEMPLE

Mamaleshwara temple, was built by King Jayasimha. It is a small temple, on the right bank of the Lidder. Rajatarangini mentions that the king adorned the temple with golden *Kalasha*. The larger temple is eight feet square internally and faces south-west. It has in front a porch supported on two fluted columns, one of which is missing. The super structure has fallen down. No remnants of the ceiling are left. The walls are straight and vertical above the string course. The temple was externally covered with

thick coat of lime plaster. It contains an old pedestal and a Shiva *Linga*. There is a stone lined tank in front of the temple which is twelve feet square and is fed by a spring of remarkably pure water which at times rises under the site of the temple in front of stairs. The whole place was originally surrounded by rubble stone wall, of which the foundations are visible on the north side. The water of the spring is cold during summer months and hot in winter.

BHIMAKESHAVA TEMPLE

A Vishnu temple, built lavishly by Queen Didda, in memory of her grandfather, King Bhima Shahi, on the left bank of the river Liddar in village Bumazav about three kilometers to the north of sacred springs of Matan on Srinagar-Pahalgam road, is known as Bhimakeshava temple. Its ceiling of overlapping stones with uppermost stone carved with a full blown lotus and the pyramidal roof in two tiers are the main architectural designs. It is open on all the sides. Its interior is eight feet square. It is almost similar to Pandrethan temple.

Queen Didda erected numerous shrines of Vishnu, one in the name of her deceased son Abhimanyu, another in the name of her father called Simhasvamin and two in her own name as Diddasvamin. She also built a *Matha* known as Diddamatha. It is still called Diddamar and the ruins of the structure stand on the right bank of river Jhelum close to Safa Kadal in Srinagar city.

TEMPLE OF GARUR

On the north eastern side of Wular Lake is situated the village of Garur. A small ancient temple, which is four feet square internally and about seven feet high from basement to cornice stands in the village. The roof has disappeared and the base is buried under-ground. The ceiling is built of overlapping stones. The temple faces north-west and stands on the bank of a spring. There is a small pointed niche in each of these walls, which contains a sculptured relief. On the back wall of the temple is the carved three-headed Shiva but the other two figures are too defaced to be identified.

PAYAR TEMPLE

Another well-preserved Shiva temple is at village Payar, a small village about eight kilometers in the South of Pulwama. On the southern side of this village surrounded by a few walnut and

willow trees near a stream is an isolated ancient Shiva temple. It is one of the rare architectural design, of ancient Kashmir and is said to be built during 483 to 490 AD by King Narendraditya. The sanctum sanctorum is eight feet square and the total height is twenty one feet including the base. The sanctum sanctorum is open on all sides and is reached by a single flight of steps on the eastern side. Inside, on the east, Shiva is seen seated cross legged on a throne, on the west is Shiva-Natraj, on the south is Bhairva pursuing some demon and on the north is three-headed Shiva seated cross-legged. In the left corner is seated Parvati. The roof is pyramidal and the super-structure is built of ten stones only. The cult image of the temple is a Shiva Linga, which has octagonal base. The doorways are rectangular and are surmounted by a trefoil arch, which is enclosed by a pediment.



PAYAR TEMPLE SCULPTURES

The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, describes the temple and the magnificent architecture and art adorning it as: "In the interior the walls are plain, but the roof is hollowed out into a hemispherical dome of which the centre is decorated by an expanded lotus flower. The lower edge of the dome is ornamented by three straight-edged fillets and by a beaded circle. The spandrels are filled by single undraped and winged figures, who with outstretched arms and legs appear to be supporting the roof. They are probably *Yakhshas*. The dome itself rests upon the cornice, which is formed of six plain straight-lined mouldings."

SUGANDHESA AND SANKARAGAURIS



SUGANDHESA TEMPLE

The more refined form and a more polished look in temple architecture is seen in temples built by Sankarvarman, who succeeded Avantivarman. He shifted his capital to Sankarapurapatnam modern Pattan and built two temples, Sugandhesa and Sankaragaurisa. These structures reveal a refinement in handling of material and treatment of ornamentation. They have a more polished look. Rajatarangini mentions about three Shiva temples at Sankarapurapatnam. The first larger temple was built by king himself and was named Sankaragaurisvara the second smaller temple was named after Sugandha his queen as Sugandhesa and the third temple Ratanavardhanesa was built by his minister Ratanavardhana. Ratanavar dhanesa temple was destroyed during the period of Sultans. No trace of the temple is left behind.

SUGANDHESA shrine is twelve feet seven inches square and stands on a double base. The temple is open on one side only and has trefoiled niches externally on other sides. These niches contained different images. The entrance to the courtyard is in the middle of the eastern wall of the peristyle and consists of two chambers with a partition wall and a doorway in the middle.



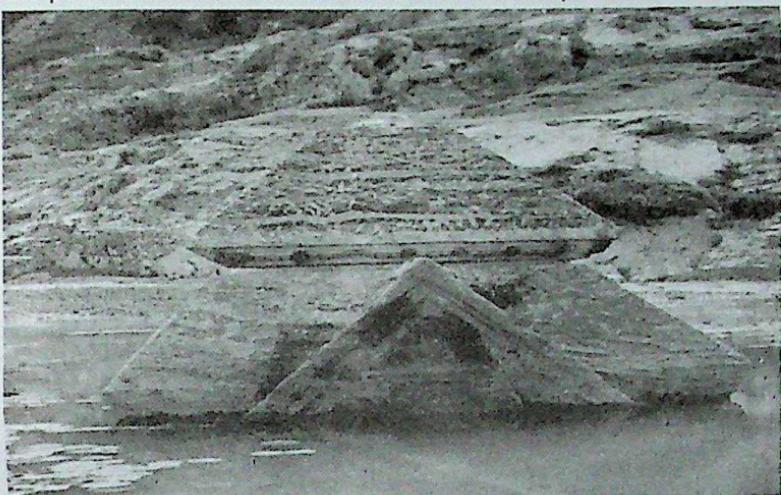
SANKARAGAURISVARA TEMPLE

SANKARAGAURISVARA is the largest temple. The cella is seventeen feet square and the central stone of the floor measures twelve feet six inches by ten feet. It has nine circular holes arranged in three rows. The left wall of the portico has a trefoiled niche, which is divided into two panels. The lower and larger one contains Lord Shiva apart from number of other figures. Above it, the upper foil, has squatting figure of Lord Ganesha.

MANASBAL TEMPLE

Nilmat Purana records, that there is an old archeological temple, on the banks of Manasbal lake near Kondball. The temple is made of large lime stone slabs. It stands near a spring, but this temple has not been looked after well. At present it is submerged

in water and very small part of the structure, its two pyramidal roofs are visible in the dry seasons. The cornice of the lower roof and the horizontal band which divides it from the upper storey, are decorated with series of dentils and metopes. Only the upper part of the pediment of the entrance is visible. The temple faces wes



MANASBAL TEMPLE

MUKTA AND PARIHASKESSAVA

The most powerful Hindu ruler of Kashmir, Lalitaditya Muktapida, built a number of new towns with great temples. Kalhan, writes in his Rajatarangini, "There is no town or village, no river or lake, no island where the king did not build a sacred foundation." He built the famous and elegant temple at Parihaskesva at his capital Parihaspura. Laltaditya, is said to have built four Vaisnava temples, Muktakesva, Parihaskesava, Mahavarha and Govardhanadhara. Besides the temples, he built a Buddhist monastery, a Stupa and a grand caitya. Their common features are the enormous size of the blocks of limestone used in their construction, the smoothness of their dressing and the finesse of their joints. Once an important centre, little of it remains now except the plinths of the Buddhist monastery, the caitya that once enshrined a colossal Buddha image and a great stupa. In fact, his prime minister a Chinese Buddhist, named Tsiang-Kiun, founded a vihara with a chapel attached to it. He also constructed a lofty stupa and gold images of Jina (Buddha). A gigantic statue of Muktakesava, Vishnu was made of gold weighing 84,000 tolas (980 tonnes) ! Another statue of Parihaskesava was built with 3,36,000 tolas (3,919 tonnes) of Silver.

Lalitaditya built another colossus of Buddha with 1,01,64,000 tolas (11,855 tonnes) of bronze. Kalhana further records, "that the emperor constructed a separate stone shrine by the side of Shiva at Parihaspura and installed two images of Rama in it, which had been unearthed near the village of Suravardhamana."



LATIPORA SCULPTURE,
PAMPORE



BODHISATTVA
PARIHASAPURA

AVANTISVARA AND AVANTISVAMI

King Avantivarman, the founder of Utpla dynasty, established his capital at Avantipura, about eighteen miles from Srinagar on the Anantnag road. He built two temples, one dedicated to Shiva, AVANTISVARA and other dedicated to Vishnu, AVANTISVAMI.

The Shiva temple, AVANTISVARA is of the panchayatana type, with the main temple at the centre of the courtyard and four subsidiary shrines at the four corners of the main sanctum sanctorum. The base on which the shrine stands is fifty-seven feet and four inches square and ten feet high. To each of its corners was attached a platform about sixteen feet square for subsidiary shrines. It has a stair on each of its four sides, twenty-eight feet wide and supported on either side by flank walls, seventeen feet in length. The sanctum is in ruins. The Vishnu temple, AVANTISVAMI repeats the plan of Martanda on a smaller scale. The edifice comprises a colonnaded peristyle, enclosing a courtyard 174 feet by 148 feet, in the centre of which is the main shrine, built on a double base with four smaller shrines at the four corners. The peristyle is comparatively plain externally except on the west side, which has a row of fluted columns. The entrance, which is in the middle of the west wall, is divided by a cross-wall into two chambers and is approached by a flight of steps bounded on either side by a plain rail and a side-wall. The front pilasters of the side-walls bear figures of Lord Vishnu and his consorts carved in relief. This temple was destroyed during the reign of Sultan Sikander.



AVANTIPORA TEMPLE SCULPTURES

NARANTHAL TEMPLE

Naranthal is a small village near Baramulla township. In the village there is an old shrine and a spring. The superstructure of the shrine is above ground and is built of plain blocks of slate. There is an arched entrance on the eastern side. The second

course from top is formed of single slab four and a half feet square and one and a half feet thick. The interior is a square of seven feet and is about ten feet high without ceiling. Traces of stone floor are visible inside.

GOSANI TENG

Gosani Teng is situated on a hillock close to Baramulla town. There is a Bhairav temple at the foot of the hillock. The description of the temple is given in old scriptures, but it is in ruins. There are seven Kunds, near the temple, known as RAM KUND, SITA KUND, LAKSHMAN KUND, BHARAT KUND etc. As the legend goes, Sri Ram whilst in exile lived here. There is *Ram Takhat* in the village Hari on the Line of Control. Nearby in the forest, there was a famous place for meditation, known as Goppa Bal. There was an *Ashram* for Sadhus at Goppa Bal.

BANDI TEMPLE

Another temple named as Dhatha Mandir or the Bandi temple lies further below Buniar, between Rampur and Uri. Its central shrine faces north-east and is built in green limestone, coated with lime plaster. The jambs of the cells were decorated with half-engaged columns, remnants of which were seen in the south-western corner of the courtyard. The pedestal of the image is extant. Fragments of columns as well as their beautifully carved capitals are lying in the compound.

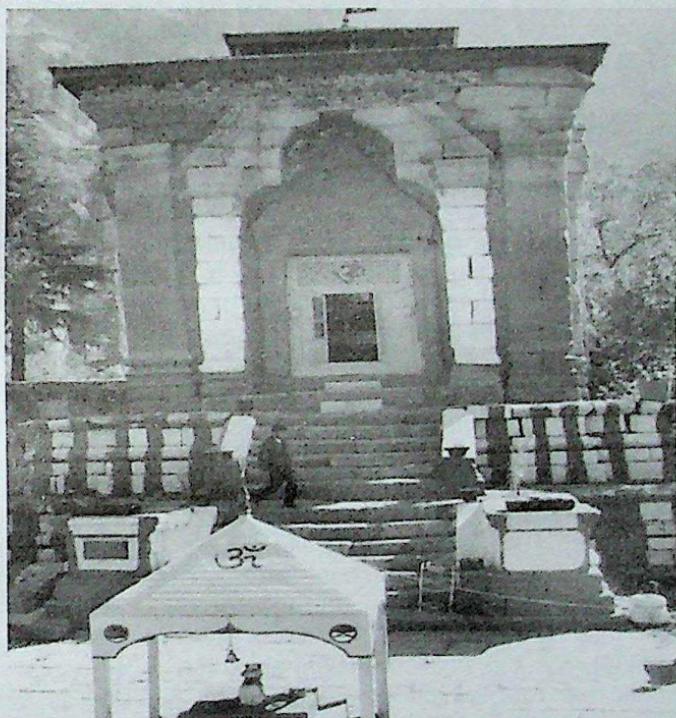
On the hillside, there are two small shrines, replica of the main temple in north-western corner of the courtyard, but now only the ruins are visible.

BUNIAR TEMPLE

By the beginning of the tenth century, the growth of style had come to an end but small shrines continued, to be raised. Among the surviving temples of this period, one at Buniar still stands. The temple is situated two miles above Rampur close to Jhelum Valley road. This temple stands on a double base similar to other structures of this kind in Kashmir.

The gateway is a double-chambered structure faced on each open side by a trefoil arch surmounted by a steep pediment. A lofty arch, standing upon advanced pilasters and enclosing a rectangular entrance gives access to the sanctum. The interior is a

square of fourteen feet. The pedestal of the image is placed on a broad platform. The quadrangle measures 145 feet by 119 feet 6 inches and consists of fifty three cells and the gateway. The gateway is a double- chambered structure faced on each open side by a trefoil arch surrounded by a steep pediment. The cells are rectangular, seven feet long by four feet broad. Each cell has a single trefoil entrance enclosed in a high-pitched pediment resting on half-engaged columns. In the centre of each range of cells except the one in which the gate way stands, is an apartment of larger of dimensions preceded by a pair of taller columns which are advanced about four feet from the rest of preistyle. Buniar temple is the only temple in Kashmir, built in granite stone of whitish colour.



BUNIAR TEMPLE

KULRAMU TEMPLE

There is a minature temple Kulramu at Gesipur, district Kupwara in Kashmir. It is of two stone pillars, generally known as Gurmat. The doorway is inscribed with Sanskrit words. The temple is lying in ruins.

In Kupwara there is another temple dedicated to Goddess Ragina, known as Kheer Bhavani temple. There is also an *Ashram* of Swami Nad Lal ji near the temple.

VIJAYESHVARA TEMPLE

The Vijayeshvara Shiva temple, is an ancient shrine of Lord Shiva. It is situated at Vimbhor or modern Bijbehara, twenty-eight miles away from Srinagar. This shrine is one of the famous *tithas* of Kashmir. It has a hoary past. According to Kalhana, King Ashoka replaced the stuccos enclosure of the Shiva Vijayeshvara temple with that of stone. The king built two temples within this enclosure called Ashokeshvara. During the time of Raja Susala the rebels used the temple premises as fortification. The temple and the town got burnt down during the reign of King Ananta. The king himself was residing at the place at that time. Raja Kalsha, restored this shrine and embellished the temple with a golden *Kalasha*. The temple and the ancient *Linga* of Vijayeshvara were completely destroyed by Sultan Sikander.

General Cunningham, visited this place in 1847, and found the ruins of an ancient temple, which he attributes to the temple of Vijayesh. Aurel Stein, also visited the place in year 1889, found some ancient slabs and architectural remains on the banks of Jehlum. He notes, "the local priests, *Purohitis* also confirmed to him about the ancient site which was fifteen feet below the surrounding terrain. The *Mahima* of this shrine is mentioned in different *Mahatmayas* and is still alive in oral tradition of *Shruti*.

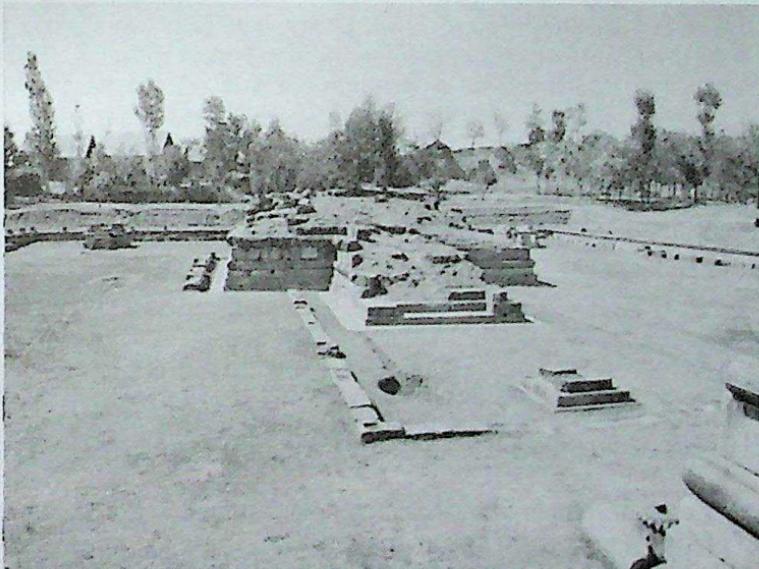
In 1859, Dogra ruler Raja Ranbir Singh, built a temple near the old site. The temple was built of the stones of the ancient temple. The temple is presently known as the Hari Chandar temple. Stein, refers to it as the new temple of Vijeshvara. The temple stands on an eight feet high *adhistana*. Instead of the pyramidal roof, the stylized ancient architecture of Kashmir, it has a curvilinear roof, which was adopted by the Dogras from the temple architecture of North India. Three golden *Kalashes* and a pointed spire surmount the temple. The temple has a circumulatory path. Inside, the temple there is a *pitha* having eleven *lingas* called Ekadash Rudur, which is the main *pitha* for worship. Besides, there is an idol of Lord Ganesha of two feet height. There are three huge chinar trees in the compound of the temple. There is a sculptures of Nandi in the temple compound besides many fragmented sculptures of the past.

KAH—KAH PAL

In the ancient massive temple complex of Vijayeshvara at Bijbehara, there is a conch shaped stone, known as Kah-Kah pal. The stone does not weigh more than sixty kilos and one can move it. According to legend, when eleven persons encircle it and apply their eleven index fingers to the base of the stone, while repeating Kah-Kah, the stone is lifted above the ground. The boulder is popularly known in Kashmiri as Kah-Kah Pal. Nothing is known about the origin and historicity of the boulder.

TAPAR TEMPLE

Pratapaditya-II, laid the foundation of the town known as Pratapapura, now known Tapar situated on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway, twenty-nine kilometers to the west of Srinagar. Pratapaditya built a majestic Vishnu temple there, which is in ruins. The base of the temple is sixty feet and six inches externally. Its walls are eight feet high and four feet thick. On each side the exposed height of the base comprises five courses and on the top of the uppermost course projected cornice must have served as circumambulatory passage. The entrance or the gateway stands in the middle of the western side of the quadrangle.



TAPAR TEMPLE

While descending from the inner courses of the staircase of the high gateway, a long row of base pillars on either side are met, which must have served as a covered passage to the temple. Over the plinth of the enclosure walls, there are long row of pillar bases for the installation of entrance columns, probably of the range of cells facing the main shrine. The temple is of a Vimana type with stepped stone structures of Garuda.

SARDIKUL

Sogam, is situated in north-east of Srinagar, in Lolab valley of Kupwara district. In Sogam, there is a place called Sardikul. Here in the hollow of a walnut tree there is a very old idol of Goddess Sarda. Its dimensions are two feet by one and a half foot with height of one and a half foot. There is an old stone here, which carries the imprint of Goddess Sarda. It is believed, that the Goddess Sarada halted here during her journey to Sardi, the place where a massive temple stands. Around the walnut tree a temple structure has been erected.

SANDHEYA KHETRA

The Sandheya Khetra begins from Akingam, famous for its Devi Shrine. It is about five kilometers from Achabal. It had a beautiful temple dedicated to Shiva Bahagwati, with two storeyed dharamshala, and large chunk of forest-land attached to it. This small village is still called in revenue records as Maqan Shiva Bhagwati. It is the only village where Kashmiri Hindus used to play on the various instruments like Chands and performed folk music till recently. The temple along with Dharmshala was burnt during December, 1992.

Archhome (Arya-Ashram) is the next village situated at Bringi river. Sangam is another village four kilometers away. There are three temples at Sangam On the eastern side is Shiva temple. A huge Linga stands in the middle of the temple. It is about two hundred years old. One stone slab of ninth century with engravings is lying there. At the entrance, one Dharmshala has been built, in the name of saint Rama Dasa by the local Hindus

The other temple is a Chandi temple, situated in the western side of the village near a stream, on a hillock. There are three idols fixed in the temple. There are some broken engraved stone slabs in the compound of the temple. It is said, that these slabs are the heritage of Mahayana of Kashmir. The art on these slabs is

striking and it looks as if some Jataka-tales have been carved on these. The third is a Ganesha temple, situated on the road leading to Kokarnag. A broken Ganesha of superb art is lying in the nearby spring, where it must have been thrown when the old temple was demolished.

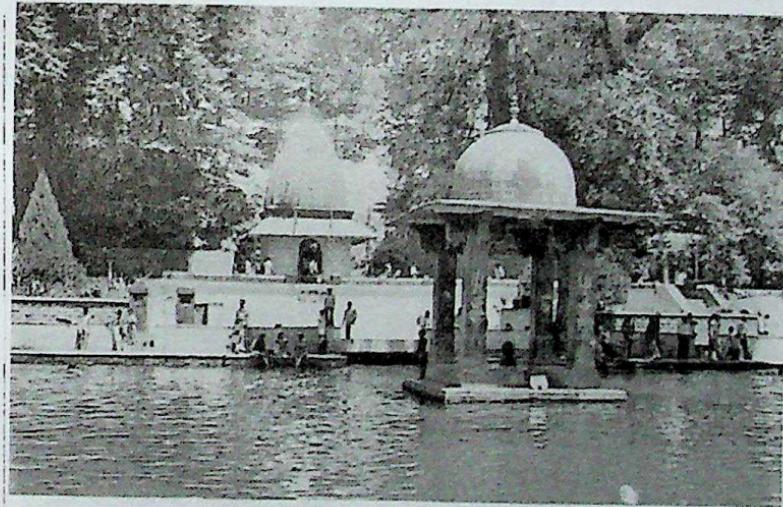
SHILLAGRAM TEMPLE

8

Shillagram temple is situated at Shillagram on Anantnag-Pahalgam road, about thirteen kilometers from Anantnag. In this temple there is a *Sahasahasra Mukhi Shiv Linga* with thousand eyes spread on its body. It is one of the rarest *Lingas* in India with immense celestial glamour and charm. According to Rajatarangini, "the holy *Lingam* was installed thousands of years before, and this temple used to be an important *Dham* for the pilgrims going to Cave temple of Amarnath.

MATTAN TEMPLE

The famous Mattan temple is four kilometers from ancient temple of Martand. It is situated in Mattan village, about sixty kilometers from Srinagar. The name of the village is derived from Martand, the Sun god, the name of presiding deity of the temple. The main temple is in a spring.



MATTAN TEMPLE

SHIVA AMARESA TEMPLE

Shiva Amaresa temple is situated at the village Amburher, four miles to the north of Srinagar city. The village lies to the west of Zuskapura, modern Zakura, on the banks of the Anchur lake. The

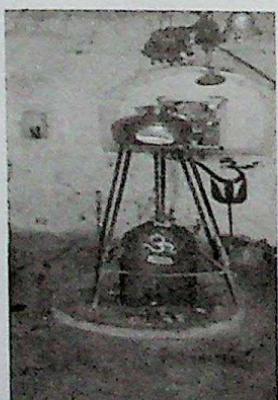
village derives its name from the shrine of Shiva Amaresvara. According to Kalhan's Rajatarangini, Amburher was known as Amaresvara, Jonnraja describes it Amarespura, and Sahib Ram's Tirath Samgraha describes it as Amaresvara.

There is a reference of Amburher in Rajatarangini, Queen Suryamati, endowed the shrine of Amaresa with *Agrahas* and a *Mutha* in 1005-1006AD. She was the queen of king Ananta, 1028-1063 AD, the last of Sahi princes. Kalhana records, "She founded two *muths* by the side of shrines of Vijayesa and Amaresa, under the names of her brother Sillana and of her husband respectively." Further "She also granted under her husband's name Agraharas at Amaresvara and arranged for the consecration for Trisulas, Banalingas and other sacred emblems." Aurel Stein visited the place in June 1895 and found ancient slabs and sculptured fragments in and around the Ziarat of Farrukhzad Sahib. He says that these remains possibly belong to the temple of Amaresvara.

SHIVALAYA TEMPLE

Shivalaya temple is centrally situated in the Guru Bazar area of the Srinagar city. The temple is surrounded by a trim, well maintained garden. The Shivalaya complex consists of an ancient Shiva temple and the Srinagar headquarters of Sri Ram Krishna Ashram.

The exact date of construction of the temple is not known, but the Shiva *Lingam* is of ancient origin. Besides the Shiva *Lingam*, there are images of Lord Shiva, Durga and Hanuman in the temple, all in stone.



SHIVLINGA,
SHIVALAYA TEMPLE



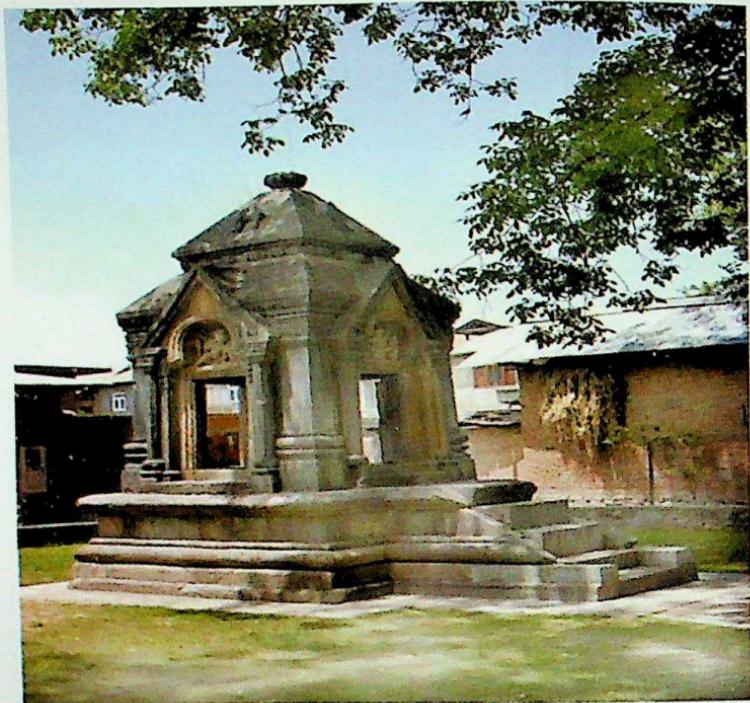
MAHA GANESHA
HARI PARBAT TEMPLE



MARTAND TEMPLE



MARTAND TEMPLE SCULPTURES



PAYAR TEMPLE



PAYAR TEMPLE SCULPTURES

GANESHA TEMPLES :

According to Nilmata Purana, there are eighteen shrines of Lord Ganesha in Kashmir. Rajatarangni notes, the prominent place of worship of Ganesha is at the foot-hill of Hari Parbat in Srinagar. Ragatarangini further notes, the idol of Lord Ganesha changed its position and faced towards the city of its own for the benefit of inhabitants. All the devotees who worship at Hari Parbat shrine first worship Lord Ganesha at this temple.

Another important Ganesha temple is at Hand Chowalgam in Kulgam district, about seventy-five kilo-meters from Srinagar. The temple is situated on the bank of a local river.

GANPATYAR TEMPLE

9

The other famous Ganesha temple is known as Ganpatyar and is situated in the heart of Srinagar city on the banks of river Jhelum. The whole vicinity, predominantly Hindu, is known as Ganpatyar. There is an old temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, venerated by Kashmiri Hindus. There is also a Shiva temple and a Dharamshalla adjacent to it.

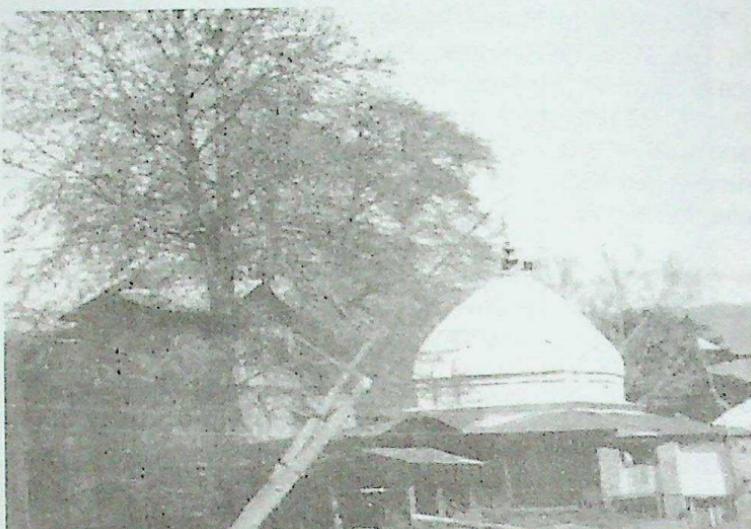


GANPATYAR TEMPLE

There is a legend, that during the atrocities committed by Afghan rulers, the original idol of Ganesha was submerged in Vitasta by the Hindus, to save it from desecration. During the Dogra rule, the idol was rained by the Hindus and installed on Ganesh Chaturdasi in the temple. Thereafter, Ganesh Chaturdasi festival used to be celebrated here with great pomp and show every year.

SHEETAL NATH TEMPLE

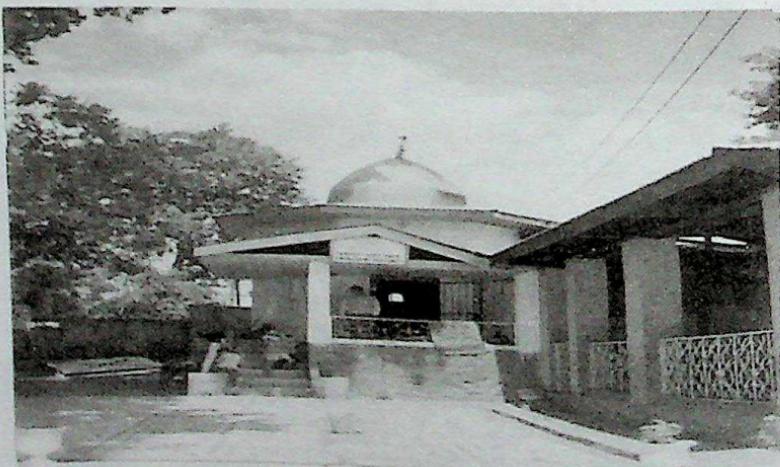
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SHEETALNATH TEMPLE

Sheetaleshwara Sheetal Nath Bhairav is an ancient temple, revered by Kashmiri Hindus from ages. But Sheetal Nath Bhairav does not fall in the category of *Astabhairvas* of Kashmir. It is situated at Sathu, in the Srinagar city and the entire locality is known as Sheetal Nath. There is a large chunk of land attached to the temple. This is very popular place of Kashmiri Hindus.

DURGA NAG TEMPLE



DURGA NAG TEMPLE

Durga Nag temple is situated at the foot of Shankaracharya hill in the heart of Srinagar city. There is a Dharmshalla attached to it and is mainly meant for Sadhus who visit Amaranth cave temple.

KATHLISHWAR TEMPLE

An ancient Sada Shiva temple, now known as Kathleshwara temple, is situated on the banks of river Jhelum in the heart of Srinagar city.



KATHLESHWARA TEMPLE

PURSHYAR TEMPLE

Purshyar temple is an ancient Hindu temple of Purush Vihar, situated at Habakadal, Srinagar. Purshayar was predominantly a Hindu locality, having large number of houses belonging to Hindu community. Hindus used to visit this temple and worship *Shivlinga*.



PURSHYAR TEMPLE

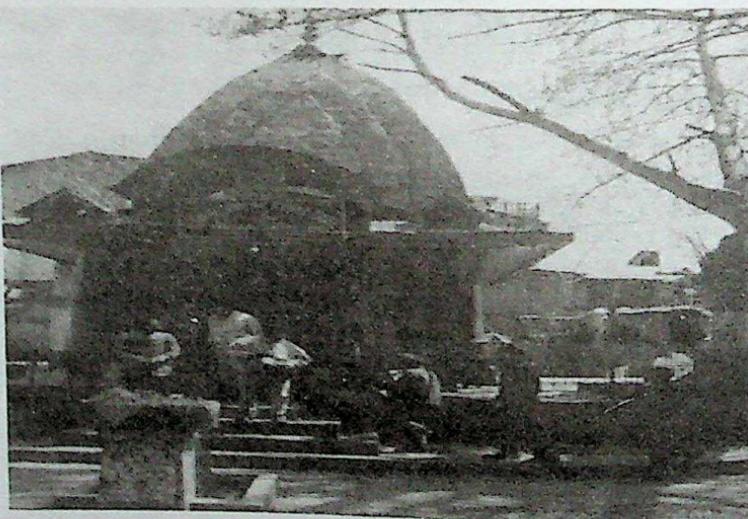
RAGUNATH TEMPLE



RAGUNATH TEMPLE

Ragunath temple is dedicated to lord Rama and is situated, near Purshyar temple, in the heart of Srinagar city. Hindus of Srinagar have great reverence for this Sri Rama temple. Hindus living around the temple, used to worship regularly Sri Rama at this temple.

SOMYAR TEMPLE



Somyar temple, an ancient shiva temple, of Soma Tirtha, is situated across the river jehlum opposite Purshuyar temple near Habakadal Bridge. Hindus used to throng this temple in large numbers, usually on *Somyr Amavasia*. (*Amavasia* falling on Mondays)

FOOT NOTES

Acc. No.
Dated.

1 WANGATH TEMPLES

Harmukat Ganga Mahatmya says, "one may obtain prominence among the Ganas by seeing Hara Bhutesvara, Jyestharudra and Nandi after taking a bath in the holy Sodara Nag. The merits of taking a bath in Sodara Nag and Uttarmansa, Gangabal are same." In fact, Uttarmansa is believed to be the abode of Sodara Nag and the linga Jyethesa at Wangath is washed with water from Uttarmansa lake. One is believed to attain the merit of performing Rajasuya and Asvamedha by taking a bath in Sodara Nag.

According to a legend, the site of 'Uttaramanasa', which is believed to be the source of Haramukuta-Ganga, Gangabal in Kashmiri, which lies at the foot of the north-eastern glacier of the Haramukuta and along the tirthas of Nandiksetra. At a short distance below the Gangabal lake, also called Uttara-Ganga, there exists another lake called Nund Kol. The inner portion of this lake with blue water, Kala-Shiva, marks the place where Shiva sat in meditation and the outer portion having light green water represents the place of Nadin, the son of a Brahman named Silada, is said to have performed penance to propitiate Shiva at this place. Shiva made this permanent abode by the side of His faithful attendant, Nadin, who is believed to have received the formula of the thousand names of Bhavani from Shiva, known as Bhavani-Nama-Sahasra-Stutih there.

In Jayendra's time 61 BC, the three most famous shrines of Shiva worship were Bhutesa, Vardhamanesa (Ganpatyar), and Vijayeya (Bijbehara). Sandhimati 24 BC, alias Aryarja of Vikramaditya dynasty, also used to worship Sodara tirtha at Wangath. Kalhana writes, "when he went about to beg his food, he was welcomed with much respect as a follower of the observances ordained by Shiva. The wives of the ascetics vied eagerly in every hermitage to give him alms. But as his alms-bowl was filled with choice fruits and blossoms by the trees, he who deserved respect, had not to suffer the humiliation of mendicancy even when he lived the life of renunciation."

King Jayasimha, also consecrated a Linga of Shiva called Bhutesvara here. His prime minister, Srngara would make available ample provisions for celebrations on full moon day of Asadha. This festival of 'Devas Vapana' mentioned in Nilmat Purana, would be celebrated over ten days. Kalhana, describes about Srngara's arrangements, "in recent times even kings could not have imitated." Sumans, a brother of the minister Rilhana in the reign of Jayasimha built a Muth at Bhutesvara and offered to his Pitirs, the holy water of Kanakvahini (Kankni).

Kalhan's family was equally devoted to this shrine. His father Canpaka paid frequent visits to the shrines of Nandiksetra i.e., Buthser and made rich endowments there. Every year he would spend seven days at this tirtha and utilise his entire savings there. Ultimately, he retired to Nandikstra. Kalhan's uncle Kanaka also used to frequently visit this shrine. In fact, the nearest town of Kangan, old name Kanakpora, is named after him.

2 CHAKRADARA

Kalhana furnishes another interesting reference to plateau of Chakradara. King Lalitaditya made arrangements for lifting up the waters of the Jhelum at Chakradara and distributing it to the nearby villages. He installed water-wheels for lifting the water to be used in paddy fields of this place. The eatables and other commodities were brought to this city by big barges and were sent to various places from here.

George Buhler collaborates these facts in his Report (1875) regarding, prosperity and importance of Chakradara. In fact he was the first Indologist to focus the attention of the archaeologists to the place.

Chakradhara was a shrine of Lord Vishnu. The temple was situated on the left bank of the river Jhelum, on a high alluvial plateau in a triangular peninsula formed by a sharp bend of the river. The place is about three kilometers above Sangam, the confluence of the Jhelum and Liddar, and about one kilometer west of Bijbehara on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway. The small tableland is now known as the Chakdhar or Tsakadar Udar.

According to 'Encyclopaedia Kashmirina', volume I, the Chakradhara temple was burnt when the Nagas stormed the city of Narpur, the capital of the kingdom of Raja Nar. This was situated on the banks of Vitasta, near the Bijbehara town. Later, Hindu kings restored Chakradhara shrine to its pristine glory.

According to the journal, 'Indian Archaeology', with the excavation of two particular types of pots at Semthan, it suggests that Kashmir was an integral part of India when Ashoka's rule was in vogue. Thus, the Semthan finds corroborates the fact that Kashmir was a part of India from time immemorial.

3 MARTAND

According to Rajatarangini, it was King Kalsha (713-750AD) who had taken refuge in this temple and had installed the idol made of gold. Fargusson speaks of King Jaisima (1128-1149AD) who also had taken refuge in this temple. Jonaraja mentions in verse 599 of his chronicle that the Sultan Sikander destroyed this magnificent temple.

Susan Huntington wrote in, 'The Art of Ancient India,' about the Sun temple that it is rectangular in plan, consisting of a mandapa and a shrine. Two double shrines flank the mandapa on the western end. It is enclosed in a vast courtyard by a peristyle wall having eighty-four secondary shrines in it. Its courtyard was often used for defence purposes in the ancient past, a sort of a fort and a place of refuge.

Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, describes Martand in the following words: "Such was once the magnificent mass of building dedicated to the worship of the Sun, a mass seventy five feet in height, thirty three feet in length, and the same in width including the wings. Entrance was gained by a wide flight of steps, which are now covered by ruins. On each of the other sides was a closed doorway surmounted by a trefoil arch, and covered by a pediment, which rose to a height of sixty feet. At the angles of the buildings on each side of the doorway were stout pilasters, which were divided into panels, each decorated with a miniature representation of the Aryan style of temple ."

According to W.R.Lawrence, "The ruins of the Hindu temple of Martand, as it is commonly called, the Pandav-Koru house--the Cyclopes of the east are undoubtedly occupying the finest position in Kashmir. This noble ruin is most striking in size and situation of all the existing remains of Kashmir grandeur." He further writes, "There are in all eighty-four columns, a singularly appropriate number in a temple of the sun. The number eighty-four is accounted sacred by the Hindus in consequence of its being the multiple of the number of days in the week with the number of signs in the Zodiac."

4 SHANKARACHARYA

According to a folk lore, Sri Adi Shankaracharya, a great philosopher, a saint of high order exponent of Vedanta, visited Kashmir in first quarter of ninth century, for advancing his Vedantic knowledge. He along with his party camped outside the city of Srinagar without any boarding and lodging arrangement. Seeing the plight of visitors, a virgin was sent to meet Shankara. She found the party uneasy and frustrated because of not being able to cook as no fire was available to them. The girl questioned Shankara and asked him as why he was unable to create fire for he was so great. The first glimpse of Shakti was exhibited to Shankara by this girl, when Shankara expressed his inability to make a fire in reply to girl's question. Then girl picked up two thin wooden sticks into her hands, recited some mantras and rubbed the sticks, fire was produced to surprise of Shankara.

Later a religious discourse was arranged between Shankara and a Kashmiri Hindu woman. This discourse continued for seventeen days. Sri Adi Shankaracharya yielded before the woman in discussion and accepted the predominance of Shakti Cult. He composed the well known hymn called Soundarya Lahari in praise of Shakti, at the top of the hill, known till then as Gopadari Hill. Kashmiri Hindus, dedicated this hill and

temple in honour and memory of his visit to Kashmir, thereafter it is known as Shankaracharya hill and Shankaracharya temple.

The Shiva linga, which is now worshiped in the temple is the modern one and was installed in the year 1907. The original image, which existed was a linga encircled by a snake. Koshur Encyclopedia published by J &K Academy records; "Behind Shiv Lingam at Gopadri, Shankaracharya temple is statue of Adi Shankaracharya, which has been installed in 1961." by Shankaracharya Dwarka Peeth.

In her book "The Cities Seen in East and West", Mrs. Walter Tibbits says in the chapter, 'The City of Sun' that; "The hill is rough and jagged as the path of Yoga. The elements have stained it in every shade of ochre, the colour sacred to the Lord of the universe. Sharp rocks break the path as the trials of the way cut and wound the feet of the aspirant to knowledge. On its summit, stands in simple solemn dignity, a small fane of grey stone. Its columns are fluted; its doom is round, surmounted by a trident. Inside is one thing only, an upright black stone..... The *Lingam* is the oldest religious symbol in the world. It is also the simplest."

5 NARASTAN

Nilmat Purana mentions Narastan as: "A man surely obtains the world of Vishnu by bathing in the water of Vitasta at Narastan."

Devotees would sing *Leelas* in the name of Narayan at this holy place;

*Narasthan Chuy Navnaran
Zeevo kon Chukh Tut Laraan
Sorrie Vat Gat Rozzee Na Laar
Kamlavati Jai Jai Kaa r"*

6 KAPTESVARA TEMPLE

There is a legend associated with the sacred spring at Kothar. King Mutskund is said to have had a pair of buffalo's ears. He was advised to take his bath in this holy spring and to his utter surprise his ears turned normal. In gratitude, he expended his treasures upon the foundation and upkeep of the temples and the spring.

Nilmat Purana describes the *tirtha* as; "One attains the world of Rudra by taking a bath in holy waters of Kapatesvara." Al Beruni says, "that the pieces of wood sent by Mahadeva appear annually in this spring in the middle of Vaisakha." Abul Fazal makes mention of this holy spring surrounded by stone temples in Kothar in his *Aain-e-Akbari* thus; "When its water decreases, an image of Mahadev in sandalwood appears."

7 MAMLESHWARA TEMPLE

The Muslim ruler, Sultan Sikander, wanted to destroy the Mamleshwara temple. After his encounter at Ganeshbal, he had to abandon his plans. When Sikander tried to strike at the statue of Lord Ganesha, he witnessed the flow of fresh blood, from the knee of Lord Ganesha, which stained the river Lidder red. After this astonishing site, he retracted his steps.

8 SHILLAGRAM

The temple was installed on seven *Marlas* of land. It has also a big chunk of land margined by old Chinar and Poplar trees. It was year 1983, local Muslim supported by local administrative machinery, attempted to grab this holy shrine along with its land. With the active co-operation of 'Devasthan Surakhsha Samiti, Kashmir', the Hindus of 'Siligam' moved to the court of law and stopped this illegal move. But 1986 riots ravaged the whole of Anantnag town and the main target were Hindu temples, their property and lands. This temple was destroyed during 1998 by terrorists and *linga* is still missing.

9 GANPATYAR

According to a press report which appeared in Delhi newspapers states, "The famous and historic Ganesh Temple in Srinagar, the Ganpatyar located at a prominent spot on the Jhelum bank between Badshah and Habakadal bridges, has been blasted. It was rocketed by fundamentalist-terrorists on the night between Jaanuary 10-11, 1995, killing twentyfive security personnel also on spot."

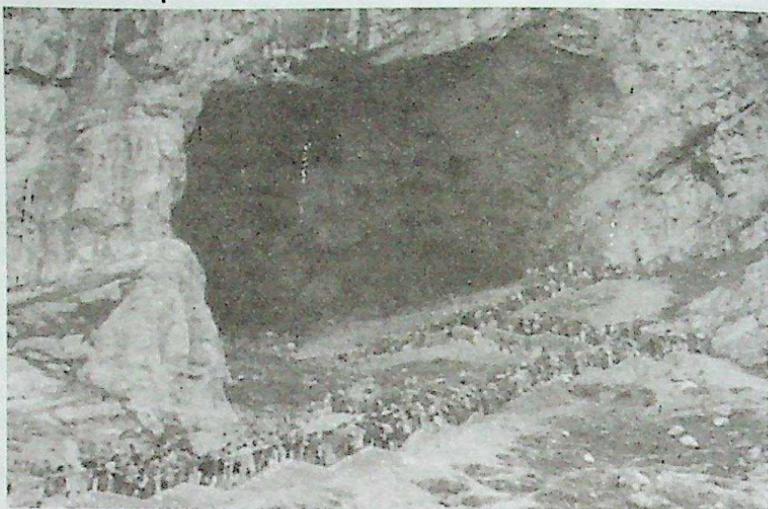
10 SHEETAL NATH

Sheetal Nath became fountainhead of social, political and cultural activities of Kashmiri Hindus. The resurgence of the Kashmiri Hindus, establishment of Sanatan Dhamam Yuvak Sabha and launching of its official organ, the Martand, from premises of Sharika Bhawan, Sheetal Nath following the fateful events of 13th July 1931, was a meajor happening at Sheetal Nath, in recent years. It remained as a hub of activities of Kashmiri Hindus till the exodus, which took place in 1990.

CHAPTER III
CAVE TEMPLES

AMARNATH

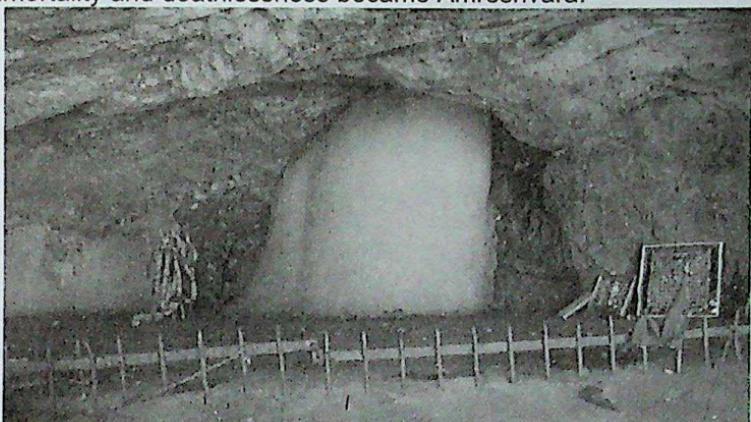
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*"Listen O Devi, I tell of the Maha-Tirtha Amreshvara,
by listening to which alone, one is freed of millions of grave sins."*
Amreshvara Mahatmaya

According to Rajatarnangini the most famous pilgrimage in Kashmir is the cave shrine of Amarnath. The cave temple of Amarnath is located in south Kashmir, at an altitude 12,720ft about 140 kilometers from Srinagar. The natural cave is about twenty meters high and enough to hold hundreds of devotees where a self-forming 'Ice Lingam' waxes and wanes with the moon. The holy cave is fifty feet long twenty-five feet wide and fifteen feet high. The cave is nature's temple where 'Ice Lingam' completely fills the right corner of the cave, the top of the Lingam touches the roof of the cave. The base of the cave is also covered with ice, like a carpet. The Lingam is formed by drops of water falling from the top of the cave and along with it two other small Ice Lingams, are also formed. They are believed to be the symbols of Goddess Parvati and Lord Ganesha. The water that flows out of the base of the cave takes the form of a stream known as Amuravati. According to Bhringish Samhita a person who bathes in the waters of Amuravati and rubs himself with ashes gets Moksha. Recitation from the Vedas and hymns pertaining to the deities and Mantra chanting are made individually and collectively by devotees inside the cave temple.

In ancient scriptures, it is recorded that Maharishi Bhrigu was the first person to find and identify the cave temple of Amarnath. It is believed that Lord Shiva, narrated the secret of Amartava to his consort Parvati and got himself transformed into ice Lingam on Sharavan Purnimashi. This sacred day falls every year on the night of the full moon in the month of Sawan (July – August) on Shrawan–Purnemashi. A pair of snow pigeons over-heard Shiva's discourse and became immortal. Thus Amarnath, the lord of immortality and deathlessness became Amreshvara!



FORMATION OF SHIVLINGA AMARNATH CAVE

According to a legend, Parvati asked Lord Shiva, "You are the God of gods, can you not find a garland made of anything better than skulls?" Shiva replied, "These skulls are very precious to me, since they happen to be yours. You have taken births and have been my consort many a times. Every time you die, your skull is collected and added to this garland." Parvati was amazed and further asked, "Why do I die, while you remain immortal?" Lord Shiva clarified, "That is because I know the mysteries that make one immortal." There-upon Parvati requested, "You must disclose those mysteries that make one immortal." Lord Shiva had chosen the cave temple of Amarnath, as the avenue for discussion with Goddess Parvati on the secrets of 'Life and Death'. One who heard the conversation would attain immortality, *Amaratvam*. So Shiva left Nandi, his bull at Bailgam, Pahalgam. Sesa, snake at Seshnaga, Ganpati at Mahaganesh, Mahaagunusa and Ganga at Panchatarni on his route to the holy cave. To check that none was present in the cave, Lord Shiva vibrated his Damaru. Two pigeons, which were in the egg form in a nest in the cave came out of the eggs by the sound of the Damaru and were fortunate to over-hear the conversion of Shiva and Parvati. When Lord Shiva realized this, he exchanged his body with those of the little birds.

There is another legend recorded in Mahatmaya that when Maha Kala, the God of Death, appeared, to Indra and other Devas, they were frightened of death and approached Shiva. They requested him to avert death for them. The Lord was pleased with the devotional hymns sung in his praise and granted immortality to Devas by taking the crescent from his head and squeezing nectar for them. Devas became immortal by taking that nectar. The same nectar solidified into a *Linga* and is worshipped as Amareshwara, lord of immortality in the cave of Amarnath. The dripping that followed from the feet of Shiva Linga took the form of a stream known as Amaravati.



AMARAVATI NEAR AMARNATH

Pilgrimage to Amarnath, adopted from Shri Amreshvar Mahatmaya, a leaf from of Bringesh Samhita narrates some of the important places where pilgrims had to perform ablutions while on the pilgrimage. In ancient times, the pilgrimage to Amarnath started from 'Koti Tirtha', Varmula, modern Baramulla. The tradition goes that Koti Tirtha is the presiding deity of all shrines of Kashmir, as all the water from sacred springs and streams of the Valley flows in confluence here. From Koti Tirtha pilgrims moved to Sharika Shaila at Hari Parbat in Srinagar. After paying obeisance to Lord Ganpati, the pilgrimage moved to Shurah Yar, situated on the right bank of Vitasta, at the foot of Sankaracharya hill. Pilgrims took a bath at Shurah Yar. Adi Shankaracharya, while on his dig-vijaya had morning ablutions at Shurah Yar Ghat. It is known as Shankara Ghat as well and a temple exists there.

The pilgrims then moved to Pandrenthan, previously known as Panthdreshti. There is a temple placed in the middle of a spring, believed to have been built by Meru, the Prime Minister of king

Paratha, who ruled Kashmir from 921-931 AD. This stone temple, still exists there. Pilgrims took a bath here and worshipped the idol of Shiva in the temple.



PANCHTARNI

Then the pilgrims moved to Padampur, modern Pampore. It was named after Maharaja Padma. The ruins of one of the two majestic temples still exist in the village. This temple was named Vishnupadma Swami. Pilgrims next moved to Varisha modern Borus. A stream rises in the vicinity, which is called Rudra Ganga. Pilgrims took a bath in Rudra Ganga and then they moved to Avantika, modern Avantipur. From there the pilgrims moved to Harigam, Bاليar (Lakhmi Khetor), then to Hastikaran, modern Hasakaly Nag. Hastikaran is a sacred spring, as the name implies, the shape of the spring resembles the ear of an elephant. The spring is about fifteen meters in diameter and the water is elephant-grey. Next stop of pilgrims was Chakresha or Chakradhar. From here pilgrims moved to Harichandra Tirth, modern Bijbehara or Vejbror. The temple of Shiva-Vijayesha or Vijayeshvara, one of the famous shrines of the Valley has given its name to the town. Next the pilgrims moved to Sthalavat, modern Thajvore. There is a famous shrine known as Amrita Tirtha or Chhota Amarnath. On the sloping mound of the plateau water oozes at two places by the side of a broken rock, where a Chinor tree stands. Water trickles down into two springs from the roots of the tree and rocky tips at the place. Pilgrims bathed here and then move towards Anantnaga, Mach Bhawan, modern Mattan and then to Ganeshbal or Ganeshpora. Ganeshbal is an ancient shrine of Ganpati, in the form of a huge boulder in the middle of the stream known as Lidder. From there the pilgrims moved to Mamal or Mamleshwara after worshipping Lord Ganesha. Mamlesh-wara temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Pilgrims bathed in the nearby spring and worshipped Shiva in the temple. Then they moved to Bragapati Khetra. This is a spring in Pahalgam which is believed to

have been associated with Brago Rishi. Nilganga, close by was the *tirtha* of Sthanishwar where pilgrims had to bathe. Then pilgrims moved onwards to Chandanwari, thereafter to Shushram Naga (Sheshnag). Then pilgrims crossed Vayujana (Vowjan), from Lidar to Sind valley, then to Panjtarni, and finally to Amuravati. The confluence of the Amuravati river with the Pantaarni is known as Sangam where pilgrims performed *Sharada* of forefathers. On their return from the holy cave the pilgrims were required to revisit Maleshwar and take a bath in the nine springs of Naudal. Later the pilgrims had to visit Patal Ganga near Nishat garden the last place where the pilgrims had to bathe to complete the pilgrimage.

At the present time the Amarnath pilgrimage is conducted under the auspices of Chhari Maharaj. Bringesh Samhita records, that' Bringesha Rishi, was once approached by the people, praying to show them the path to salvation. The sage advised them to take a pilgrimage to the cave temple of Amarnath and pray to the Shiva Lingam there. To ensure safe journey to the cave temple, Bringesha Rishi prayed to Lord Shiva and was graced with a pair of holy maces. Ever since, the maces have become the symbol of protection for the pilgrims and have now taken the form of Chhari- Maharaj---the holy maces. The Chhari leaves after performing the Puja at Dashnami Akhara (Srinagar) on the 4th day of the bright fortnight of Sawan. The Mahants who wield the divine command of the holy place carry the two holy maces. When the Mahant after the prayers at the cave temple takes his seat, a Sadhu holding one of the maces stands on his right and the other stands on his left.

After the exodus of the Hindus from Kashmir, the journey starts from Pahalgam. The next halt is at Chandanwari, which is ten kilometers away from Pahalgam. The old name of the place is 'Sthanu ashrama'. 'Sthanu' is an epithet of Shiva and literally it means 'a pollard'. Lord Shiva sat in samadhi like a pollard in the lap of Himalaya where 'Deodar' grew. From Chandanwari the pilgrimage goes to Pisu Gathi. Pisu Gati is a steep hill of two kilometers. The next halting place is Seshnag, which is seven kilometers away. The Seshnag Lake is twenty five square kilometers in area. The lake is fed by the Kohenhar glacier , which looks like the hood of a cobra. The milky-water of the lake can be seen just two hundred meters down in a trough-shaped basin. The mountain around Seshnag is covered with snow and it has seven peaks, which resemble the seven heads of the mythical Seshnag. The distance from Seshnag to Panchatarni is about seven kilometers. In between is a five kilometers climb to Mahagunas,

the highest peak in the whole track. Panchatarni is the last halting place for pilgrims. It is a wide plain among the mountains, where five streams flow side by side. There is the sixth stream on which pilgrims perform *Shradas* of their dead. From Panchatarni to the holy cave is a distance of six kilometers.

There is a shorter route to Amarnath from Baltal, which is situated on the Srinagar-Leh highway. It is ninety-four kilometers from Srinagar. The road from Srinagar passes through the valley of Sonamarg. The Amarnath shrine is sixteen kilometers from Baltal. The first three kilometers of the route are a simple path. Thereafter, starts the arduous climb of another three kilometers, through pine forests, reaching Brarimarg. From there, the path descends to Sangam, the confluence of the Sind and the Amaravati. Some stretches are very stiff and difficult. Another arduous ascent of about half a kilometer lies ahead. After this, the trek is comparatively easy, and the climb gradual. At Neha Nar pass the route turns to Dardkut, where the pilgrims from Pahalgam route join it. The pathway follows the right bank of the Amaravati upto the foot of the Amarnath cave.

DHANESHVARA, CHHOTTA AMARNATH

Dhaneshvara, popularly also known as 'Chotta Amarnath', a famous cave temple, is situated in the jungles of Arin-Dardpora, about fifteen kilometers from Bandipora, a town in the north of Kashmir, fifty six kilometers from Srinagar. The town is situated on the banks of the Wular Lake, where Vitasta, joins it. All devotees reach this town on *Sawan Shukal Chaturdasi* for onward journey to village Arin. From Arin, pilgrims go on foot as the path is uneven and lies through upland fields with gradual ascent. On reaching the base of the forest atop, there is a spring. The next halting place is the forest village Shamthan, where devotees spend the night chanting religious hymns and singing *bhajans*. Shamthan is a small village, with scattered huts. There is no habitation on the way onwards. Early next morning after taking a bath, the pilgrims start a five kilometer hazardous journey towards the cave temple. Some pathways are narrow and risky. The caravan of pilgrims moves in a beeline very carefully owing to the steep ascent, especially at Bhairav Ghati. In between village Shamthan and the holy cave, one has to cross a stream known as Amaravati.

Dhaneshvara is one of the six holy seats of Kubera, giver of wealth, a friend of Lord Shiva and Naga-Nila, the lord of Yaksas. According to 'Nilmat Purana', 'Dhaneshvara the God, bestowing

opulence and wealth upon the devotees has his seat located near Vitasta.

Entrance to the holy cave is limited to seven devotees at a time. The tunnel leading to the temple inside allows one-way traffic and takes about twenty minutes for a group to enter the cave, have *Darshan* and brief *Puja*, then return. The length of the tunnel is about a hundred feet and a devotee has to walk in the first part of the tunnel with his back bent. This portion is wide, forty feet in length and about four feet high. The second part of the tunnel is low and narrow. One has to crawl as it is two and a half feet high and almost of same width. It is about thirty feet in length and the rest of the tunnel is of the same length but narrower in height and width. Between second and third part there is a bend in the tube and this bend is the narrowest part of the tunnel. After the third part of the tunnel, one can stand on his feet in a chamber like cave even though cold water flowing inside makes creeping harder. The area of this cave temple is ten feet by fifteen feet. The space in front of idols is just for seven devotees to stand and pray. All the idols of Kubera, Shiva, Parvati and Ganesha are about fivefeet in height. The cave has enticing stone work, engravings on walls. Water drips at unseen places and oozes at some places forming a small brooklet flowing out from the tube. This water is considered as sacred as the water of Ganga and the divine gift of Lord Dhaneshvara, by the devotees. It is collected and distributed as *Prasad*.

Inside the cave water drips down on the head of an idol from a source resembling the teats of a cow in the dome above. There is a traditional saying, that the name of this shrine is 'Danisvar' derived from the Sanskrit root word 'dainu', which means a cow. There is a hallow cut in the Parvati's idol called as the Goddess's pocket. A coin dropped in this pocket is heard to drop to a long distance downwards.

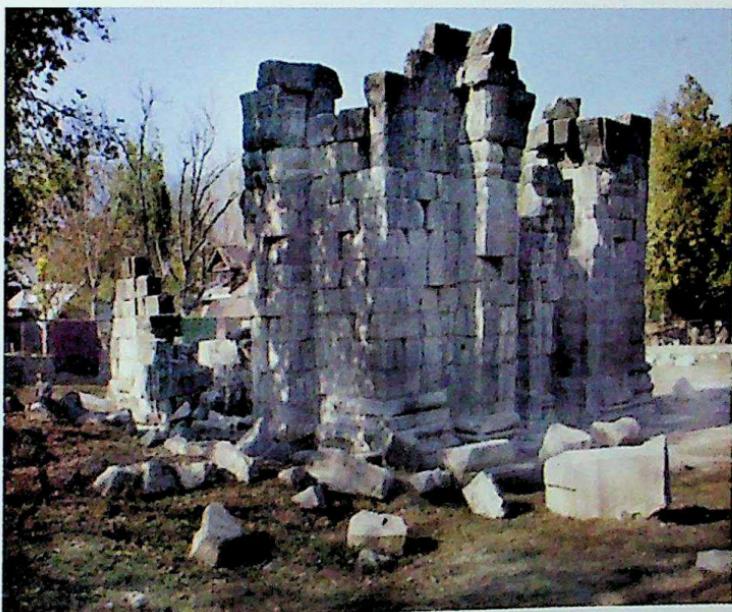
HARSEESVAR CAVE

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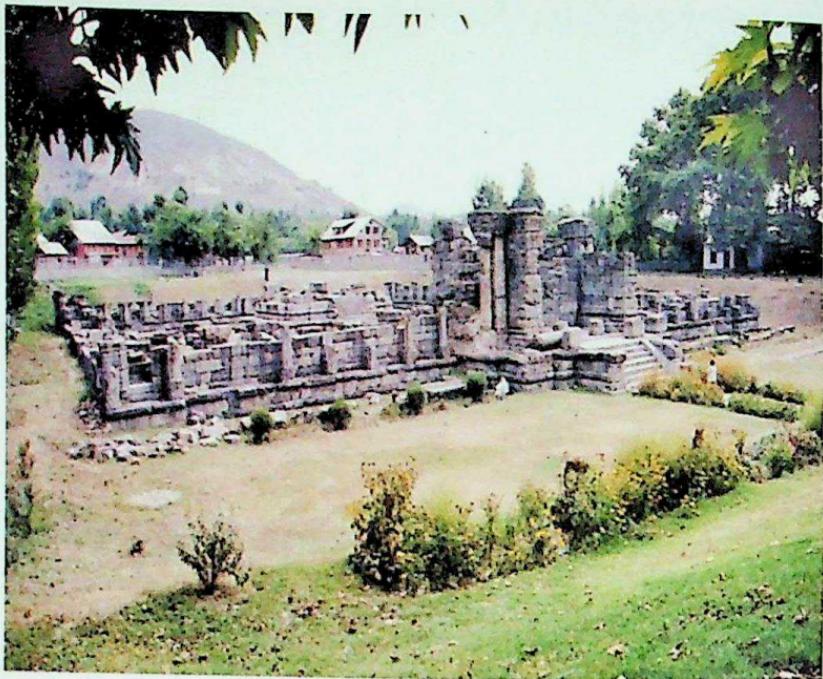
The Cave temple of Harseesvar is another Shiv Dham in Kashmir. This cut-cave temple of Lord Shiva is on the hilltop of Harseesvar mountain at an altitude of 8000 feet in village Khunmoh, about sixteen kilometers south of Srinagar. Kashmiri Hindus pay obeisance to Lord Shiva, in this cave temple on Shrawan Purnima and Darb Amavasya. At the foot of the hill, there is a small spring called Bhuvaneshwari. After passing the holy spring, there is a steep narrow path leading to the temple. The ascending as well as descending is tough because of thorny



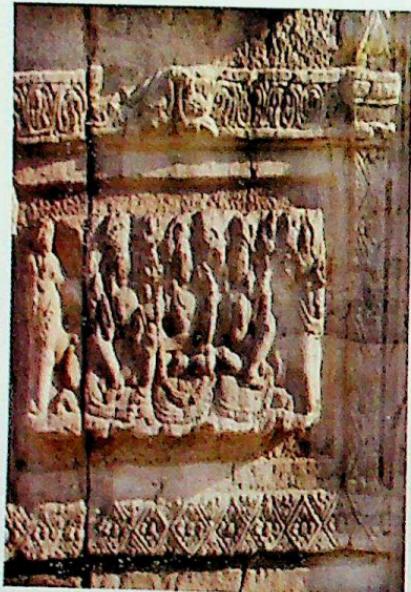
DATHA TEMPLE



FATEH GARH TEMPLE RUINS



AVANTIPORA TEMPLE



ANTIPORA CARVINGS AND SCULPTURES

bushes and crude edged rocks. After covering three-fourth of the path, there is one giant rock ladder called Yam Haer,"Yama's ladder". This rocky path is quite steep. After trekking up the tedious track for nearly four hours the top of the Harseesvar hill is reached. There is virtually no space to sit. The pilgrims have to keep standing. A step down, there is a square meter wide space known as the *Angan*.

The opening of the cave is hardly two square feet wide. One has to crawl to enter the cave. The cave inside is two square yards in length and breadth. On the left side of a small platform, which is called *Pranali* on which is installed Shiv Linga of over a foot in height .On the ceiling of the cave is carving of Shesh Nag. There is constant dripping of the holy water from Shesh Nag. At a distance of one yard ahead is the statue of Lord Narayan.

BEERWA CAVE

Beerwa is a village situated south of Gulmarg. Southern side of the village is flanked by a mountain range and at the eastern spur of this mountain range is located a cave connected with greatest Shiva philosopher of Kashmir, the exponent of 'Kashmir Shivaism', Acharya Abinav Gupta.

The cave is located at the height of nearly three hundred meters on the super of the ridge overlooking the crescent shaped narrow valley of evergreen trees with Sukhnag Nalla flowing through it. The entrance of the cave is like a rectangular room where 8 to 10 persons can be accommodated. On going further, the cave begins to narrow and opens in another smaller room where a 'Shiva Lingam' is visible, further the passage narrows.

Acharya Abinav Gupta entered this cave with 1200 disciples following him. None of them returned. Even at present while offering prayers, the Kashmiri Pandits recite the same prayer which the Acharya and his followers recited while entering the cave. It is believed, that they entered 'Shivloka' in their earthly bodies through this cave after moving further deep down into the dark passage. The cave is held in great veneration by the Hindus of the valley and till 1990, it was a place of an annual pilgrimage.

BUMAZUV CAVE

The village of Bumazuv is situated a mile away, to the north of the sacred springs of Bavan in Mattan, Anantnag. There are two

caves in the limestone cliffs on the left bank of the Lidder River. The larger cave temple is dedicated to Kaladeva. The cave temple stands at the far end of a natural but artificially enlarged fissure in the cliff. The entrance to the cavern, which is more than sixty feet above the level of the river, is carved into an architectural doorway. It consists of a single trefoil-arched doorway, surmounted by a pediment and side walls. On the left-side wall is a small rectangular niche measuring two feet two inches by one foot one inch. Its pilasters are carved with floral scrolls of extra-ordinary delicacy. In its interior is a small temple, which is nine feet five inches square externally and stands on a base four feet six inches in height. It has a projection of the porch and the corner pilasters have two rectangular niches. There is a *Shiva linga* standing at the entrance of the cave.



BUMAZUV CAVE TEMPLE

Dr. A. Stein, observed that this temple is the same temple, as Bhimakeshva temple, that is mentioned by Kalhan. However, W.R. Lawrence noted that on the basis of the construction of the temple and material used in its construction the temple could be the earliest specimen of a Kashmir temple, and dates from the first or second century AD.

At the foot of the cave, there are two temples, which have been converted into Muslim tombs. Both of them are now covered with a thick coat of mud plaster, under which all their artistic and architectural features are concealed. The larger temple has been

identified with the Bhimakesava shrine built by Queen Didda. Bishop Crowie writes, " that the temple is at present supposed to be the resting place of a Mussulman Saint, Baba Bamdin Sahib." To the west is another smaller temple which is now the tomb of Ruknu-ud-din Sahib.

CAVE TEMPLE, CHANDANWARI

The cave-temple of Shiva at Chandanwari is situated, a short distance before Chandanwari on Pahalgam- Chandanwari Road. It is a natural cave and is located in a rocky portion of a meadow just above the treeline, known as Shiv Marg. There are at least three caves in the complex.

The first and main cave is quite shallow. It is less than twenty feet deep, around ten feet high and around fifteen feet wide. On entering the cave-temple there is a whitish stone idol, a bust of Lord Shiva, which is a little more than a foot high. It is about 1500 years old. Over the centuries it has been eroded by weather. Despite of blurring details, certain things are still visible. The cobra coiled around the neck of the idol and a hump on its other shoulder, probably the Trishul is easily seen. There are more than a dozen *Shiva Lingas* near the idol. These idols and *Lingas* have been carved out of a natural, raised platform, around five or six feet higher than the ground.

On the right side of the cave, about three feet higher, there is another smaller cave. Actually, it is a narrow extension of the first cave. This is next to an opening that lets in lot of light and air. There is another idol there. Next to it is a well preserved, *Shiv-Linga*. To the left of the main cave is a third dark cave. It is a slim, tall but a deep cave. Water trickles down in the cave. The idols in the cave-temple have been eroded considerably. Only two *lingams* have their oval tops intact.

There is a perennial spring at a distance of 250 meters from the cave-temple. It is called *Amrit Kund*. It is located on the bed of a seasonal nallah. When the snow melts, the water comes hurtling down the nallah, bringing loose stones along with it. The crystal-clear water of this spring is stored in a man made stone trough. It is about seven inches high, its front is about nineteen inches and its left and right sides are sixteen inches each. It has only three sides. The water then turns left; as a result, the left side of the trough has been eroded considerably. The entire trough has been carved out of a single stone.

FOOT NOTES

1 AMARNATH

Amarnath means Deathless God--- Lord Shiva. He is God of gods, Mahadeva, about whom Bhishma says in Mahabhrata, "I am incapable of enunciating the attributes of the wise Mahadeva, who is ubiquitous but nowhere visible; who is creator of Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra and their lord as well; whom all the deities from Brahma to the Pisachas worship; who transcends all natural phenomenon as well as the absolute spirit, whom the Rishis who practice discipline and have arrived at truth contemplate; who is indestructable, supreme, the Brahma himself; who does not exists yet exists."

Rajatarangini mentions that King Ram Deva, imprisoned the debauch King Sukh Deva and later drowned him in the Lambodheri, Lidder, among the mountains of Amarnath about 1000BC. It is also said, that from 1008BC to 1048BC, King Nar, a great devotee of Lord Shiva, would visit the holy shrine on Shravan Purnimashi, every year. It also mentioned in Samdimat, Arya Raja, a great devotee of Shiva who rose from the position of a Minister to be the king of Kashmir, "used to worship a Linga of snow above the forests, which is not to be found elsewhere in the world during the delightful Kashmir summers.". Rajatranangini, further states in that Shushram Naga (Sheeshnag) is seen to this day by pilgrims proceeding to Amreshvara.

As per ancient sourses, the devotees of Lord Shiva from time immemorial worshiped at the cave temple of Amarnath. It is recorded that Himalayan caves have been abode of celestial beings and great sages used to meditate for hundreds of years in these caves. It is also recorded that the Himalayan mountain range especially the northern range is indeed the first and the sublimes symbol of divinity. "Of the mountains, I am the Himalaya" says Lord Krishna in the Bhagwat Gita. Kalidas described the Himalayas as; 'the laughter of Shiva'. Someone asked Swami Vivekananda, "Why have we so many Gods and Goddesses?" He promptly replied, "Because we have Himalaya." The music of the Himalayan streams brought divine feelings to the seers. Rig Veda (10.94), 'O rocks, O mountains, swiftly clashing, you bring to God's ears your rhythmic din.' The rhythmic din of Hara Hara Vyom Vyom, the pilgrims will always hear when the rushing streams fall like thunder with the sound of Vyom, Vyom on the rocks and the flow out in frightening speed with the sound Hara, Hara.

Adi Shankara, inspired by snow clad Himalayan peaks and ice Lingam of Shiva at cave temple of Amarnath wrote of Shiva;
"Oh, Shiva, Thy body is white, white is Thy smile,
the human skull in Thy hand is white.
Thy axe, Thy bull, Thy earrings, all is white.
The Ganga flowing out in foams from your matted locks is white.
The crescent moon on Thy brow is white.
O, all-white Shiva, give us the boon of complete sinlessness in our lives."

Swami Vivekananda wrote about Shiva of Amarnath;
For whom all gloom and darkness have dispersed,
That radiant light, white beautiful,
As bloom of lotus white is beautiful,
Whose laughter loud sheds Knowledge luminous

The worship of the *Linga* according to Vivekananda originated from the famous hymn in the Atharva-Veda Samhita sung in praise of the Yupa-Stambha which represented the 'Eternal Brahman'. The fire, the smoke, the ashes, flames, the Blackwood and the ox connected with this Vedic sacrifice gave place to the conceptions of brightness of Shiva's body. His tawny matted- hair, his blue throat and the riding on the bull of Shiva and so on---just so the Yupa-Stambha gave place to the Shiva-*Linga* and was deified as the high Devahood of Sri Shankara.... In the *Linga-Purana* the same hymn is expanded in the stories meant to establish the glory of the great Stambha and the superiority of Mahadeva."

On August 2, 1898 Swami Vivekananda had Darshan of Amarnath. When he entered the shrine, a profound mystical experience came to him and latter he said, 'Shiva Himself had appeared before him'. He further said; "the ice *Lingam* was Shiva Himself. It was all worship there. I never enjoyed any religious place so much, so beautiful, so inspiring."

On the night of the 11th day of the bright fortnight of Sawan (July-August) all pilgrims assemble at Pahalgam. Swami Vivekananda describes the on going pilgrimage as; "The procession of several thousands of pilgrims in far-away cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. It strikes one with wonderment to observe the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up in some valley with incredible rapidity at each halting place with its bazaars and broad streets running through the middle and vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn, when the whole army of gay pilgrims are on their march once more for the day. Then again the glow of the countless cooking fires, the ash covered Sadhus under the canopy of their large geru (orange) umbrellas pitched in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their dhunies (fire), the Sanyasis of all order in their various garbs, the men and women with children from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at night fall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus, all these and many other romantic sights and experiences of a pilgrimage, which can be met with nowhere outside India, are most impressive and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion. Of the psychological aspect and significance of such pilgrimage done on foot for days and days, much could be written. Suffice it to say that it is one of those ancient institutions, which have above all, kept the fire of spirituality burning in the hearts of the people. One sees here the very soul of the Hindu nation laid bare in all its innate beauty and sweetness of faith and devotion."

Swami Ramatirtha, on having a glimpse of 'Amareshwara *Linga*' uttered in ecstasy an Urdu couplet, which means;

*"Where ice is bedecked in formless movement,
There stands supreme-consciousness as Amar Linga"*

Francios Bernier was the French physician who accompanied Emperor Aurangzeb to Kashmir in 1663. He has mentioned about cave temple, "a magnificent cave full of wonderful congelations." Ali Mardan Khan, the Mughal Governor during Emperor Shahjahan's time, has composed verses in Persian about divinity of Mahesvara of Amreshvara

Vigne in his book 'Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh and Iskardu' (1842) says; "The ceremony at the cave of Amarnath takes place on the 15th of the month of Sawan,(28th July) . Not only Hindoos of Kashmir but those from Hindoostan of every rank and caste can be seen, collecting together and traveling up the valley of Lidder towards the celebrated cave."

Abul Fazal, notes in Aini-I- Akbari, "Amarnath is considered a shrine of great sanctity. When the new moon rises from her throne of rays, a bubble as it were of ice is formed in the cave which daily increases little by little for fifteen days till it is some what higher than two yards, of the measure of yard determined by His Majesty. With the waning of moon the image likewise begins to decrease, till no trace of it remains when the moon disappears."

Pandit Anand Koul, the pioneer of archaeological research in Kashmir, who carried research regarding the *ice-linga* inside the cave of Amarnath, made the following observations; "This *lingam* is not impregnated with any matter, but is composed of simply pure water turned into ice. Nor is it an ice-spring, as some say, for on Amavas days the ground in which it stands is found dry. There is, off-course, gypsum in the cave, but it does not form the ingredient of the *ice-lingam*. This *ice-lingam* waxes and wanes with the moon, which has been observed by several reliable persons who have stayed at Panchtarni, for a full month and visited the cave from there daily. The phenomenon is considered wonderful by not only Indian scientists, but also by some European scientists who must have been aware of the formation of rock-matters."

In ancient times during Hindu rule in Kashmir, the starting point of the pilgrimage to Amarnath was Varmula modern Baramulla. Kashmiris still call it Varmul. But during Muslim rule, lot of restrictions were imposed from time to time on Hindus for undertaking pilgrimage to Gangabal, Amarnath and to other holy places. But devotees of Shiva, in small numbers used to have *Darshan* of *Shiva-Linga* even after risking their lives. However, during Sikh rule in Kashmir, all such restrictions were removed and pilgrimage to Amarnath was restored. The 'Chhari- Maharaj' used to start from Amritsar, those days. During Dogra rule, the pilgrimage would start from Srinagar and now after the exile of Kashmiri Hindus from the valley, it starts from Jammu.

Cave temple of Sri Amarnath never got lost nor was re-discovered. Mention of Amreshvara in Nilmata Purana and Rajtarangini indicates that this *tirtha* was known and worshiped in ancient times. It is believed, the cave temple is more than five thousand years old *tirtha*, as old as Sapt-Rishi era, Kashmiri Hindu calendar, accordingly, the current calendar year of Kashmiri Hindus is 5084. There has been regular pilgrimage to Amarnath since then.

In his Chronicle of Kashmir, a sequel to Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Jonaraja (1459 AD) relates that that Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin (1420-1470AD) paid a visit to the sacred tirtha of Amarnath while constructing a canal on the left bank of the river Lidder (vv.1232-1234). The canal is now known as Shah Kol.

In the Fourth Chronicle named Rajavalipataka, which was begun by Pjaya Bhatta and completed by Shuka, ending 1586AD, there is a clear and detailed reference to the pilgrimage to the sacred cave (v.841, vv. 847-849). According to it, in a reply to Akbar's query about Kashmir Yusuf Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir at that time, described among other things the Amarnath Yatra in full detail.

Amreshvar, (Amarnath) was a famous pilgrimage place in the time of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan also. In his eulogy of Shah Jahan's father-in-law Asif Khan, titled "Asaf Vilas", the famous Sanskrit scholar and aesthete Panditraj Jagannath makes clear mention of Amreshvara (Amarnath) while describing the Mughal garden Nishat laid out by Asif Khan. The King of gods Indra himself, he says, comes here to pay obeisance to Lord Shiva". Ali Mardan Khan, another Mughal Governor during Emperor Shah Jahan's time, has composed verses in Persian about divinity of Mahesvara, the Lord of Amarnath.

." P.N.K.Bamzai writes in A History of Kashmir';"Iftikar Khan (1671-75), a Governor of Aurangzeb, was using force to convert the Pundits in Kashmir to Islam. Some pious men among the Pundits then met and decided to go to Amarnath and invoke the mercy of Shiva, therefor delivering them from the tyrannies of the bigot. At the Amarnath cave one of the Pundits, in a dream saw Lord Shiva who told him to go to Punjab and ask for help to Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru of Sikhs, to save the Hindu religion. He spoke to his companions about the revelations. About five hundred Pundits proceeded to Anand Pur where Guru Tegh Bahadur was living." Pandit Kripa Ram Datt of Mattan, who was Sanskrit teacher of Gobind Rai, was leader of these Brahmins.

The noted Kashmiri naturalist Pandit Samsar Chand Kaul, in his booklet titled 'The Mysterious cave of Amarnath', In 1819, the year in which the Afghan rule came to an end in Kashmir, Pandit Hardas Tiku founded the Chhawni Anmarnath at Ram Bagh in Srinagar, where the Sadhus from the plains assembled and where he gave them free rations for the journey, both ways from his own private resources."

2 HARSEEVAR CAVE

As the legend goes, the opening of the cave loses its size by one barley grain in thickness every year whereas the opening size of another cave called Sarseesvar, just at a little distance up, opens to the same thickness of a barley grain. As Kalyug advances, the Harseevar cave opening thus closes by and by, one day it will get completely shut.

CHAPTER IV

SPRING SHRINES

GANGODBHEDA TIRTHA

1

The *tirtha* of Gangodbheda, also known as Behda Devi and Bhedagiri, comprises a stone lined tank with stone steps and remains of a surrounding wall. It is situated on a flattened portion of a north-easterly radiating spur of Pir Panjal range about sixty feet above the bed of Birnai streams, a tributary of Romchu or Kakpura kol, flowing in a north-easterly direction, at present called Budbrar. It is called Bijabrari by Gujjars. It is about twenty kilometers south-west of the hamlet of Drabgom and one kilometer north of Pudan hill at 9387 feet, in Sukru area of Kashmir. The shrine is approachable from Drabgom via hill villages of Mospur and Kilar.

The tank is about seven square meters in area with its four corners corresponding to the cardinal points with a bubbling spring in its northern corner. According to Stein, "there is an opening on the north-eastern side marked by two carved stone pillars. Originally, marking the door step and still showing the holes for the pivots on the slopes of the hillock just below the door and at a point corresponding to the level of water in the tank is a spring which evidently is a natural out-flow of the tank and serves to drain its surplus water." Stein adds that near the ruined doorway on a huge boulder two *Lingas* of about twenty centimeters in height and a thirty centimeters high figure of an undraped lady carrying water-pitchers have been carved in relief on a detached boulder. On the south-east side of the tank, about thirty meters above the tank, there are heaps of rough stones from a linear mound which according to Stein, may have been the living quarters of *Purohitas* attending the shrine or a *Dharmshala* for pilgrims.

Nilmat Purana notes that by bathing in Gangodbheda, a person obtains merit of bathing in Ganga and is honoured in heaven. Here, the Goddess Saraswati is seen in the form of a Swan in a lake situated on summit of Bedagiri, which is sanctioned as the source of the holy Ganga.

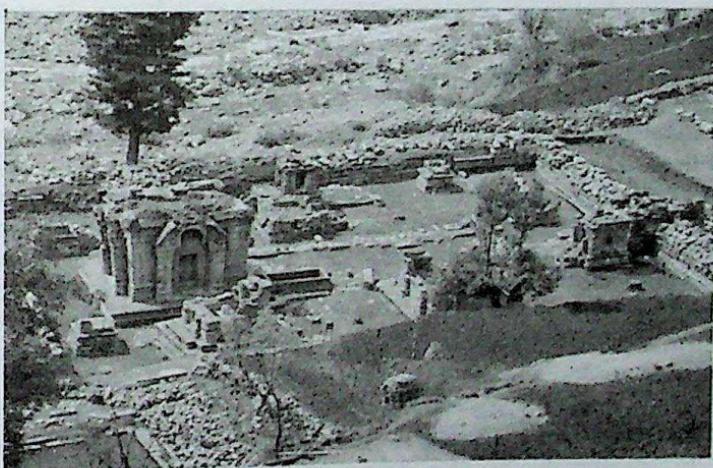
Gangodbheda Mahatmaya, states that Rishi Pulasthya, while performing long penance in the land of Sati made Ganga gush forth from Himvat for his worship. When the Rishi wanted to discharge the Ganga water after completing his worship, he was stopped by the divine voice of Saraswati, which came from the sky.

The voice said that Ganga had issued from a mountain in Bheda forest therefore a holy pilgrimage of Gangodbheda will be formed there. Goddess Saraswati further informed the Rishi, that the holy Ganga will manifest herself in this place for one third of every month and rest two-thirds in heaven and hell. Rishi Pullasthya prayed that Ganga should remain at Bheda all the time. His wish was granted and tirtha of Gangodbheda came into being. In order to obtain glimpse of Goddess Saraswati the Rishi under took another hard and long penance and Goddess Saraswati appeared before him in the form of a Rajhansi swan. Gangodbheda Mahatmya further states that no snow ever falls over it for a distance of about 125 Hastas.

SODARA TIRTHA

2

Sodara Tirtha, modern Naran Nag has been since very early times, an important center of pilgrimage for Kashmiri Hindus. Sodara, in Kashmiri is derived from Sanskrit *Samudra*, meaning ocean. Nilmata Purana mentions Sodara Nag in connection with the shrine of Bhutesvara (Buthsher) and Kankavahini river. Ablutions in the Sodara spring are recommended for the pilgrim visiting the temples of Bhutesvara, Jyesthesa and Nadin.



SODARA TIRTHA

According to Harmukatganga Mahatmya, the particular region around the spring of Sodaranag was also known as Bhuteshvara or Shiva Bhutesha—the lord of beings. The entire area is clad with dense forests. Roaring stream of Kanaknai or Karanknadi flows to

the south of Sodara Tirtha. It is formed of the tributaries, which flow out from the sacred Nundkol and Gangbal Lake.

Sodara Nag lies to the north of the temple complex of Wangath. It is an oblong-rectangular structure. Its northern side is a rocky and the original spring has been camouflaged with a drain chamber. The other three walls are built in dressed and polished masonry in a stepped fashion with a few Lingas carved on the rocky surface. R C Agarwal, a renowned archaeologist believes that these lingas date to fifth and sixth century AD with the spring being of prehistoric origin and properly channeled. A tank is scooped out for storing the spring water and is lined with ancient slabs.

The Nilmat Purana describes the spiritual merits of taking a bath in Sodara Nag. It says that a bath in Sodara Nag has a purifying effect on soul and body. It says, "one may obtain prominence among the *Ganas* by seeing Hara Bhutesvara, Jyesthesvara and Nandi after taking a bath in the holy Sodara Nag. The merits of taking a bath in Sodara Nag and Uttarmansa, Gangbal are same." In fact, Uttarmansa is believed to be the abode of Sodara Nag and the *linga* Jyethesa at Wangath is washed with water from Uttarmansa lake. One is believed to attain the merit of performing Rajasuya and Asvamedha by taking a bath in Sodara Nag. Nilmat Purana further adds, that the Sodara tirtha, lies at the outer most limit of Nandikseta or Nandisaksetra -- the sacred territory; from the lakes on the Harmukta down to Bhutesvara. Nandisa is the designation of the Shiva worshipped in the Nund Kol lake, Kalodaka lake. The inner portion of the lake has black colour and is supposed to be the residence of Kala or Shiva. The outer portion of the lake is however, blue in colour and is the place where Nandin lives. There is also a legendary description of how Lord Shiva came to take up his residence in this area in the form of Bhutesa, in Nilmat Purana. The mountain spur which stretches south-east from Harmukh peaks marks the residence of Bhutesa or Bhutesvara.

TRISANDHEYA TIRTHA

3

Trisandheya or Saindheya Tirtha, the abode of Gayatri, is situated about twenty three kilometers from Anantnag and three kilometers from the famous tourist resort of Kokar Nag, on Anantnag-Ahlan road near Divalgam, village of temples. The actual location of this sacred spring is in village Sund-brari in Pargana Brang. This ebbing and flowing spring has a small basin.

It is about five feet deep and five yards wide. It remains dry almost all the year except in the months of *Jeth-Har*. During this period water appears in the spring automatically.

The process of ebbing and flowing of the water continues intermittently for some time. This occurs several times a day. In *Jeth-Har*, pilgrims throng to *Trisandheya Tirtha* and wait near the holy *Nag* for rising of the water. They go in for prostration, praying it to re-appear and when water starts surfacing, the pilgrims exclaim *sand, sand, sand* with this they perform ablutions. The devotees are blessed by performing *Sand*. They carry holy water from this spring as it is believed to be holy.

TAKSAK NAG

4

Zewan is a village situated ten kilometers east of Srinagar. Taksak Nag, a spring is situated in this village. Bilhan, who lived in eleventh century was born at Khunmoh, a village five kilometers east of Zewan, described the spring, "A pool filled with pure water sacred to Takshak, the Lord of snakes." Khalhan records in *Rajatarangini* that the spring was a place of pilgrimage.

The inclusion of the spring as a *Tirtha* in the list of *Tirthas* in *Mahabharata* signifies its antiquity. Pilgrims when on their way to Harishwar cave offered *Puja* at the spring on the twelfth of the dark fortnight of *Jeth* corresponding to the month of June.

At present, the spring stands intact with embankments of chiseled stones full of pure and sweet water. The spring measures fifty feet by fifty feet and has depth of three feet. The water source is in the north-east corner of the spring.

ISBER

Isber is a small village situated on the eastern side of Dal Lake. It is a sacred place for the Hindus of Kashmir. In ancient time, it was known as 'Suresvarikstra', the field of Suresvari. This holy place is mentioned in *Rajataragani* and in other texts as a place of 'exceptional holiness.' Isbar is located at the foot of the mountain side, which rises to the peak of Mahadev. Around 3000 feet above Isbar village, is located the shrine of 'Durga Suresvari,' who was worshipped on a high mountain crag to the east of Isbar. As the rugged rock on which the seat of the Goddess was located could not offer any scope of construction of any building, several shrines in her honour were erected on the gentle slope on the foot

of the mountain which extended upto the shores of the Dal lake near famous Nishat Bagh. It is a sacred *tirtha* of Goddess Durgesvari.

The pilgrimage to 'Suresvari' necessitated pilgrimage to several springs in and around Isbar, the famous one being 'Satadhara.' It lies in a narrow gorge some 1500 feet below the rock of 'Suresvari.' According to 'Rajatarangani' King Samdhimat built a temple in honour of his Guru Isana at this place. This shrine was called Isesvara, from which emerged Isbar. The temple of Isana is no longer there.

Isber became famous because of the location of Shaiva Ashram of Swami Lakshman Joo, who took his abode at Isbar in the year 1934. He loved the spot because his ideal preceptor Abhinavagupta, one of the most prominent authors of Kashmir Shaivism had lived somewhere around the place about nine centuries earlier. Swami Lakshman Joo, the sage of Isbar, was the most outstanding exponent of Kashmir Shaivism in the twentieth century.

GUPT GANGA

Gupt Ganga is situated in a village close to Isber. In the village there is a spring, which fills an ancient stone lined tank known as Gupt Ganga. This holy place is visited specially on the Vaisakhi festival and devotees from all over Kashmir have a holy dip in the spring.

GAUTAM NAG

5

Gautam Nag is situated on the outskirts of Anantnag town. A shrine dedicated to Gautam Rishi, the founder of 'Nyaya' school of Hindu philosophy is located here. There is a mention of the sacred spring in the Puranas as well. Gautam Nag has been the base camp for the Amarnath pilgrimage. Year after year on the appointed day, the 'Charri Mubarak', silver mace of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati was dipped in the Holy spring at Gautam Nag before the pilgrimage proceeded to Mattan.

Sages and saints of Kashmir like Pandit Gashkak, Pandit Mankak and Pandit Sarvanad preached their gospel and performed penance at this place. A *Maha Yagna* used to be performed every year on 'Phagun Krishnapaksha Ekadeshi' to commemorate the memory of Guru Mankak.

During February 1986, anti-Hindu riots broke out in district Anantnag. Gautam Nag was one of the worst hit places. Muslims claimed the exclusive possession of the spring on the ground that a Sufi resided there who was called 'Rishi Saab.' They also claimed that another Muslim saint, Balram Shah was buried there. The Hindus claimed that the grave like structure inside the Gautam Nag Shrine is a Samadhi of a Sadhu. Hindus further claim that the spring which include the Mahant's cottage, the old pond of Gautam Kund, a burial site and the rest of the ground, has always been mentioned as Hindu property in land records. But the Muslims led by the Mirwaiz of South Kashmir, Qazi Nissar, launched a bitter battle against Hindus. The disputed Hindu shrine was declared a disputed area by the State government by a notification.

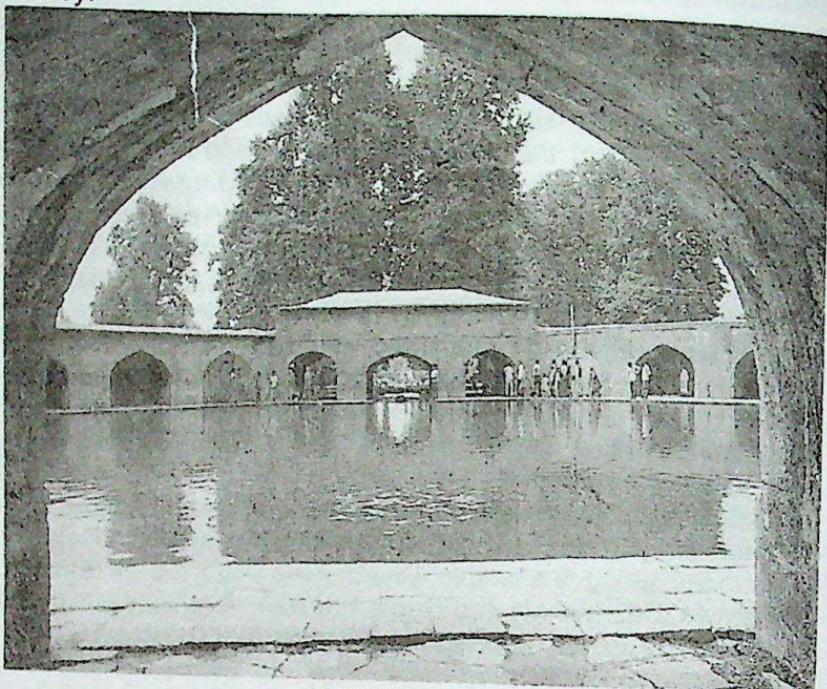
KULWAGISHIRI

Kulwagishiri Asthapan is an ancient shrine situated in the middle of Kulgam town in South Kashmir. It has a beautiful spring. Close to the spring is a temple, Dharmshala and a Geeta Bhawan. The temple, Dharmshala and Geeta Bhawan were vandalized and burnt down by Jehadi terrorists in December 1992.

VERINAG

Neel Nag is the source of Vitasta, Jhelum River. Neel Naag or Neel Kund was also called Shoolghaat during earlier times. During the Mughal rule when the ancient Hindu names were replaced by Persian names, it was given the name of Vernag. The name of the village in which the spring is located, came to be known as Vernag or Verinag. It is about twenty-five kilometers away from Anantnag and about four kilometers from Jawahar Tunnel on Srinagar -Jammu Highway. Verinag is a place of pilgrimage for Hindus. In ancient times, there were temples standing to the east of the spring. There were also caves and cells on all sides of the spring for seclusion of the pilgrims and Sadhus. This was confirmed by Abu'l Fazal, who visited Kashmir during the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar. He noted in *Iti-Azwar* that there was Vishnu's idol on the bank of the spring. When Jahangir visited Verinag, he got the spring repaired and measured. It depth ten feet, sides twenty feet by twenty feet. It was made *Qubbat* with black stones laid out on eight sides. Two entrances from left and right of the entrance to the spring were raised to the second storey. M.A. Stein says that the stones used in the construction of

the spring may have been of the temples that were standing nearby.



VERINAG

Jehangir got a garden laid through which the water of the spring flowed. *Baradaris* and residential houses were constructed for the King and Queen Noorjahan. Shah Jehan, the son of Jehangir got a cascade and watercourse constructed through the middle of the garden in 1626. An inscription to this effect is carved on the wall of the spring.

DUMTABAL

Dumtabal is an ancient shrine situated at the edge of the forest on the right side of Hangulgund on Naru-Watnar road, traversed by the path between Verinag and Soaf in south Kashmir. This shrine has a beautiful spring, where from water continuously flows. An ancient Laxmi-Narayan temple stands near the spring. Annually, a *havan* used to be performed on *Wahika Zonna Pach Kah*, *Baisakh Pakh Ikadashi*, known as *Narda Kah*. The pilgrims first take a holy bath in Naran Nag, at Naru and ascend towards Dumtabal, where they have another holy bath. Then they perform *Puja*.

VETH VATUR

Veth Vatur, known in ancient times as the Vitasta, is about 116 kilometers from Srinagar. It is situated about two kilometers to south-west of Verinag and about three kilometers from the Jawahar-Banihal Tunnel. There is a big spring under an old Chinar tree at Veth Vatur. A Shiv Linga is placed on the Badra Peeth and three stone slabs with engraved figures of Vitasta on one slab and other deities on the other two slabs stand on the bank of the spring. The water of the spring runs into a big stream. Some of it runs over the ground floor of the Dharmshala. The water flows down through some villages to join the water of Verinag and Sandran Nala down below Chingund village.

Vitastra Mahatmaya mentions that the Vitasta originated at Veth Vatur by the trident of Lord Shiva. Ever since, it is worshipped as the source of Vitasta. According to the *Mahatmaya*, the spring was created on the thirteenth moonlight day of Bhadron. Hindus worship the Lord Shiva's idol and other deities on this day every year. A hermitage was established at Veth Vatur and it continues to be there even today. It is known as Vitasta Ashram or Veth Vatur Ashram.

Kalhana writes, "King Ashoka founded a town here and built many stupas. He constructed a Chaiteya after he embraced Buddhism. He also built a Dharam Vihar there and erected a very high Vihar at the place." At present, there are no traces of Ashoka's Buddhist Vihars and Stupa left at Veth Vatur. The ruins of an old Dharmshala exist there.

According to a legend, Lord Rama is believed to have visited the shrine during his reign. He is believed to have bathed in the spring and worshipped the Linga and the idol of Vitasta. It is mentioned in *Uttara Ramayana*. King Yudhistra along with his brothers also visited Veth Vatur during the banishment of the Pandvas from Hastinapur. All the brothers worshipped at the spring. *Van Parva* of *Mahabharata* refers to their visit.

Sikander-But-Shiken, destroyed the holy tirtha of Veth Vayur. During Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign Pandit Shankar Pandit of Uma Nagri, a great scholar, used to teach Shastras and Karam-Kanda. He selected four Bhramcharis to take charge of four different shrines in Kashmir. Pandit Birbal Kak was sent to Veth Vatur. He found the hermitage in ruins and started cleaning the holy place. The shrine had one hundred Kanals of

land that had been usurped by local Muslims. Birbal Kak got it restored to the shrine. A Dharmshala was built there. After his death his disciple Swami Nityanand took charge of the shrine. He got a three storied Dharmshala constructed there. The old Dharmshala was used as a cowshed. Swami Nityanand passed away in 1958. Thereafter many Sanyasis stayed in the Ashram from time to time. Sanyasi Sita Ram took the charge, till the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir in 1990. The shrine is in dilapidated condition now.

TIRTHA OF GUDAR

Gudar is an ancient 'Tirtha' of the Hindus of Kashmir. This place of worship has been built as early as 2450-2500 BC. Gudar hill about 300 feet above ground, is a part of the Pir Panjal mountain range. Gudar is a small village in Kulgam district of Kashmir. There is a small spring above Gudar village in the midst of a large number of pine trees and a rock in the formation of cow's mouth (*Gomukh*), through which water flows down into a pool, *Kund*. This is the ancient Gudar Tirtha. The water of Gudar spring flows down to meet 'Veshav' river at the foot of the hill. This confluence is known as 'Sangam', where a pilgrimage is made every twelve years, like the one held at Haridwar. .

There is a legend which is narrated in 'Godavari Mahatmya'; Rishi Gautama prayed to Maha Devi, the consort of Lord Shiva for the Ganga jal, the holy water. She was pleased and appeared before him. She rent the Gudar hill. Water gushed out. The spring as well as the brook formed by its water came to be known as Godavari or Gudar. Nilmat Purana also makes a mention of 'Gudar Tirtha.' King Nila includes Gudar when he enumerates the famous places of worship of Kashmir to Chandra Deva.

The Gudar pilgrimage is made after every twelve years. It starts on the first of Navratra of Chetra month, lunar and ends on Chaitra Pooranamashi, full moon the next year. The pilgrimage is made on Thursdays. It is presumed that Godavari appeared on Thursday. Pilgrims ascend the Gudar hill through the Gudar village to reach the holy spring. After prayers at the spring and drinking its water, they make 'Parikrama,' and come down the hill on the left side to reach the Sangam down below. There they bathe and perform 'Shradha' of their dead. By ascending on the left and coming down after passing over the Gudar spring, a full 'Parikrama' is made of the 'Tirtha'.

RUDRA GANGA, BORUS

Borus is a village situated about thirty kilometers from Srinagar on the eastern side of the road to Anantnag. It is a small village at the foot of a hill, about three miles below Avantipur on the right side of Vitasta, Jhelum. A stream flowing down the hill at the foot whereof the village stands is known as the 'Ganga'. In the village stands a 'Shivalinga,' carved out of a stone about five feet in height, and a circumference of eight feet. The Linga is placed near a small spring called 'Rudraganga'. The linga has developed some tiny cracks on its surface but is completely intact. To represent a sacred thread, a thin streak is engraved round it. As mentioned in 'Rajtarangini', this village has been identified with the shrine of 'Visvaikasara'. Pilgrims on their way to Sri Amar Nath used to take a dip in 'Ganga' and paid obeisance to the 'Shivlinga' before proceeding further.

ASHADHAR

Ashadhar shrine is situated at village Khiram in tehsil Bijbehara. It is believed to be the abode of 'Kheer Bhawani'. The sacred place is two kilometers from the village situated on a hillock known as Ashadhar. There is a sacred spring inside the shrine. The devotees offer milk in this holy spring. Besides, 'Kheer Bhawani' spring, two more sacred places named 'Dodah Pokhar' and Nagabal are also located in the village. They are also springs considered to be sacred and places where the Hindus worship

VICHAR NAG

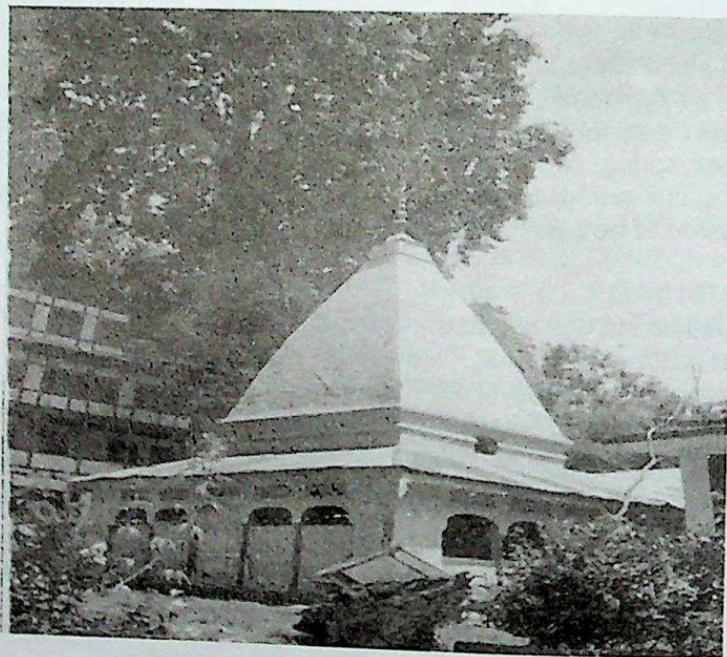
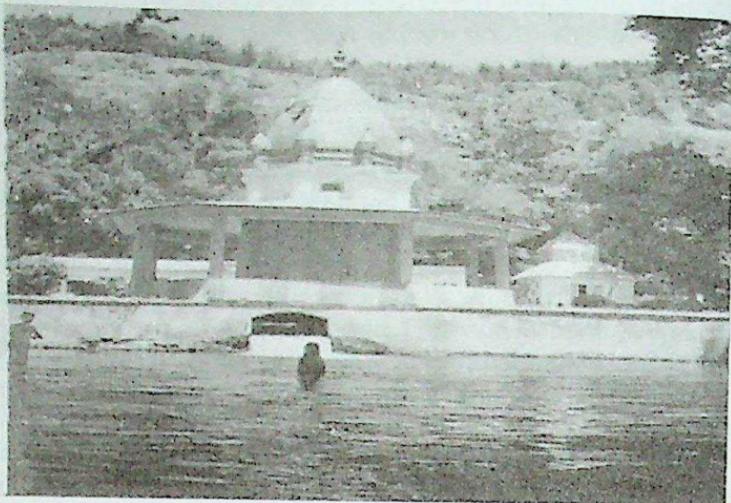
Vichar Nag is situated on Srinagar-Leh highway about ten kilometers from Srinagar. The annual festival is held on Chaitra Amavasya, the last day of the Kashmiri calendar.



VICHAR NAG

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NAGBAL ANANTNAG



NAGBAL COMPLEX, ANANTNAG

In Anantnag town, is a large spring and a temple complex known as Nagbal. This holy spring is famous for its crystal-clear water. Adjacent to the main spring there are two small sulphur springs also. The water of these springs is said to cure skin diseases. During winter, hot water comes out of the spring and

during summer cold water. Nagbal temple complex is one of largest temple complexes in Kashmir. There are two Shiva temples, one Ganesh temple, one Durga temple, one Radha Krishen temple, one Sita Ram temple, one Hanuman temple and four Dharmshalas. Annual festival of Ananta Devata is held on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Bhadra month, at the temple complex.

SESH NAG

Seshnag is nine kilometers from Chandanwari en-route to the temple of Sri Amarnath. Seshnag lake is twenty five square kilometers in area. It is fed by the Kohenhar glacier which looks like hood of a cobra. The milky waters of the lake are seen just 200 meters down in a trough-shaped basin. The mountain around Seshnag is covered with snow and it has seven peaks which resemble the seven heads of mythical identity of the serpent Seshnag .



SESH NAG

KUNGAM NAG

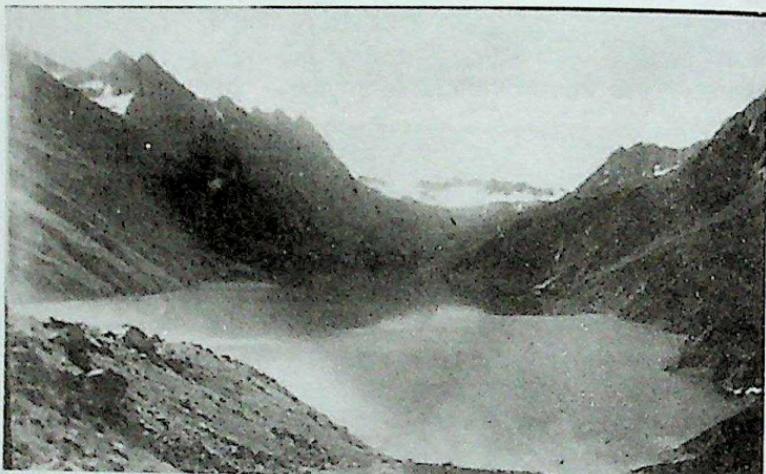
Kungam Nag is situated two kilometers away from village Soaf on Hangulgund-Kachwan road in Breng valley, south Kashmir. This spring is full of water round the year. The spring is surrounded by hills and wild flowers. It is also known as Kumar Ji's shrine. On 'Kumar Shyam', 'Navreh Trie' and 'Chitra Zonna Pach

Akdoh', devotees worship at this sacred spring. It is believed that on these days a coloured fish in the spring raises its head out of water, which is considered to be an auspicious event.

WASKI NAG

Waski nag is on the slop towards the south-east low hill above Chowgam village. There is a spring known as Wasak Nag. It flows only for six months from April to September. According to a popular belief, this spring reappears then at a sight on the other side of the mountain range at a hill site not far from Banihal in Doda.

KAUNSAR NAG



KAUNSAR NAG

Vishnu Pad is the orginal and ancient name of the revered spring Kaunsar Nag. It is about fourteen miles away from famous Aharbal falls, in Kulgam district. Kaunsar Nag is a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus of Kashmir, though the journey is long and hazardous.

BUDEY NAG

The holy spring of Budey Nag is situated near Panjgam four kilometers from Suftashali village, in south Kashmir. It is situated on the bank of Korel river, surrounded by willow and mulberry trees. There are lush green fields all around the place. The spring is full of water. It is a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus of Kashmir.

SHEILA DEVI

Sheila Devi Nag is situated at the foothill on the right side of the Jhelum Valley road in Baramulla. The temple and the holy spring is situated on the bank of river Jhelum. A marble *Murti* of the Goddess stands in the center of the spring. The spring has a considerable space all around for *Parikrama* and for an assembly of devotees in front of the Devi. There are a few *Dhramshalas* in the complex for devotees and *Sadhus* to stay and perform *Sadhana*.

INDRA BHA PILGRIMAGE

Indra Bha pilgrimage is also known as the shrine of Kani Moj. The shrine is situated at a place six miles from Baramulla. There are structures resembling teats of cows, where from water spouts out. There is another stone structure like the foot of a cow. Devotees offer milk to the deity while performing *Puja*. They observe a fast, while on pilgrimage. The puja is performed in autumn on Thursdays. The yatra is undertaken on Indra Bha of the Hindu calender.

TRIHGAM NAG

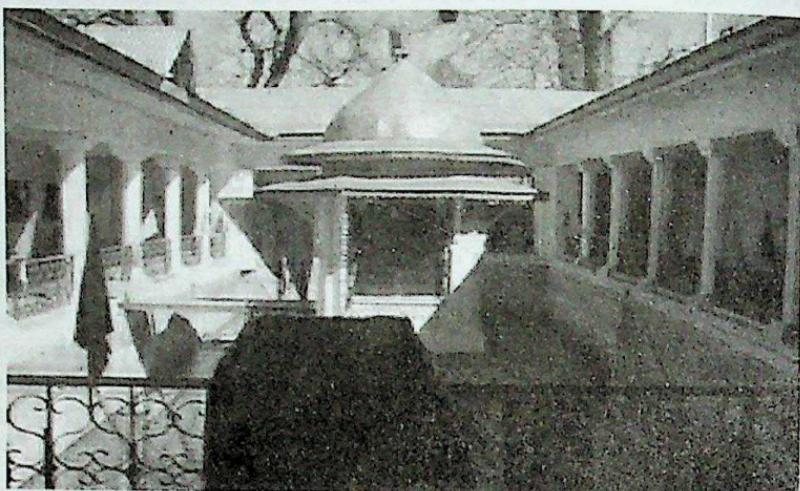
The sacred spring of Trihgam Nag is situated on the Kupwara –Kralpora local road in Kupwara. It has crystal clear greenish water with fish of golden colour. From ancient times Hindus of Kashmir used to worship at the spring and has been mentioned in various historic texts. A samadhi of a saint known as Trehgam Babaji is near the spring.

NAND KI SHOR

Nand- ki- shor shrine is situated at Seer Jagir. It is a famous pilgrimage of Kashmiri Hindus. It is situated on the left bank of the river Jhelum in the district of Sopore. It is an ancient monument. It has a Chinar tree and a big Nag, spring in the center of a huge walled compound. The water of the spring gushes out through an inner opening and falls into another spring where devotees take bath. There is a big Dharmshala attached to it. This *tirtha* is known as incarnation of Goddess Shakti. An annual pilgrimage is held at this shrine and a *Hawan* is performed there on *Baishakh Amavasia*.

SHAIL PUTRI

Shail Putri shrine is situated on the left bank of river Jhelum at Baramulla. It is a temple dedicated to 'Kheer Bhawani', known as Shail Putri. The temple is also dedicated to Goddess Durga. Inside the temple Goddess Durga is seated on a throne, which is surrounded by a spring from which water gushes out. This place is popularly known as 'Devibal'.



SHAIL PUTRI TEMPLE

DODAH POKHAR

Dodah Pokhar shrine is situated in village Khiram. Two sacred springs covering the area fifteen feet by thirty feet are revered by devotees. Milk is offered, on all important occasions and poured in the holy springs. A *Shiva Linga* is located near the spring. It is one and a half foot in height.

NAGBAL KHIRAM

There is another spring at Khiram, which is called Nagbal. Its size is thirty by sixty feet. A '*Shiva Linga*' about two feet in height used to be near the spring. Idols of Laxmi and Saraswati used to be near *Shiv Linga*. The spring is presently covered with galvanized iron sheets. The idols were taken away in 1990.

LAV NAG

Lav Nag is situated in the valley of Lolab in Kashmir. There is a legend about Lav Nag. According to the legend, there was some

discord between King Loh and Kashyap Rishi. Once King Loh decided to perform a *Havan*. He requested Kashyap Rishi to preside over the *Havan* as the priest. As Kashyap Rishi blew the conch, the king shouted *Aavahan*. Kashyap Rishi shouted back *Visarjan*. King Loh protested. The Rishi told him, "It is my right to perform *Havan*. How dare you do it?" The *Havan* remained inconclusive. At the place where the *Havan* was performed, there is a spring, named *Lohnag* or *Lavnag*. The Samadhi of Kashyap Rishi is about one kilometer from the spring. This spring with crystal clear water is shaped like a *Pranali*. It is about three feet deep. Water comes out from the western end of the spring. The spring is ten feet by ten feet in dimensions. Maharaja Gulab Singh soon after having acquired Kashmir visited it. He sanctioned a land grant of 113 Kanals for the upkeep of spring. His favourite pujari, Pandit Gash Bhat, was in his company when Dogra ruler visited the place. Shav Ratangeer, an ascetic, who used to stay at Durga Nag temple in Srinagar came to Lav Nag and stayed there for eighteen years. There is no specific day for puja at this historic spring. On the western side of the spring is a very old Chinar tree with four branches. It is called *Chakrabooni*. After 1989, when Muslim militancy spread in Kashmir, the Chinar was burnt.

GAURI NAG

In the vicinity of Lav Naga, is another spring called Gauri Shouri Nag. This holy spring is dedicated to Goddess Gauri, the consort of Lord Shiva. This spring is small, round in shape and believed to be the resting place of the Goddess. According to legend, Goddess Gauri came to attend the *Havan* performed by King Loh. She made the spring her abode.

THANIN NAG

Thanin spring is located in the Kalaroos valley of Kupwara district of Kashmir. It is eleven feet by eleven feet and its depth is five feet. It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Hindus consider it a place of pilgrimage.

HARI NAG

Holy spring of Hari Nag is situated in Varnav near Sewer in the Lolab valley, Kupwara district of Kashmir. There are two springs in Krusen, a place founded by Raja Karn. The two springs are dedicated to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. There is a *Shiv Linga* in the Siva's spring. The spring dedicated to Goddess

Parvati, is believed to be bottomless. Ladies are forbidden to visit this spring.

LAVAL NAG

Laval Nag is another spring near Divar which is considered sacred by the Hindus. It is four miles from Lohnag spring, in Lolab valley of Kashmir. It is a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus of Kashmir.

DEVIBAL BARAMULLA



DEVIBAL BARAMULLA

Devibal is an important place of worship for Hindus living in and around Baramulla township. Apart from main temple, there is a Dharamshala also attached to it.

CHANDIGRAM SPRINGS

Chandigam is situated in Lolab, Kupwara district of Kashmir. The village is named after Goddess Chandi. There are three holy springs in Chandigram. The original Chandinag spring is spread over an area of one and a half Kanal in the forest. It is filled up now and has turned into a swamp. Before 1947, when a little excavation was carried out here, earthen lamps, small artifacts, pottery associated with rituals were found, confirming the antiquity of the place. Local people call this place as Kanzpov. Digging in the swamp also confirmed that spring was underneath and have been filled up. A small quantity of water trickles out of the swamp.

KUMAR JI'S NAG

Kumarji's Nag is the other spring in Chandigam and lies in the Gujar basti. The Gujars, originally hail from Abbottabad, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The spring is situated on an elevated area near the Dak Bungalow. It is seven feet by seven feet in dimensions. The water is clean and cold and is five feet deep. The stones forming the upper masonry are intact and boundaries of the spring are fenced. The old stones, Sam or stone steps lining the spring are two and a half feet long and well-polished. There are no fish in the spring. Hindus of Lolab used to visit the spring on *Amavasiya* and *Puranmashi* days for Puja. Devotees from the other parts of Kashmir would also perform Puja on these days at the spring.

PIR NAG

There are two other springs in Chandigam. One is called Pir Nag, spring of Chandibaba. It is also known as Niranjan Akhara. The spring is lined by big old stones, Sam, stone steps, which are four in number. Throughout the year, the spring remains full of water. The spring is in the shape of the *Pranali*. The second spring is Nahgee, situated adjacent to Mirsar. It is a small spring. Before the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir in 1990, they used to offer milk pudding, Kheer here. Half a kilometer to the east of Nahgee spring is Bren Sar. There is a Bren, alm tree and a small spring near it.

NILAKANTH NAG

Nilakanth Spring, also known as Nagbal, is situated in Lolab. It is fifteen feet by fifteen feet. Old stones line its walls. Water is crystal clear and spring is four and a half feet deep with no fish in it. According to local belief Lord Shiva used to sit here. It is believed, the spring is guarded by a hooded snake, yellow in colour. Elderly villagers of Sogam claim to have seen the snake. Hindus of Sogam used to make the offering of yellow rice, *Tahar* or perform *Satyideev* on every *Purnmashi* day. There are also a number of kunds named after Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman. Ram and Sita Kunds are linked together and the water collected, is supplied to the village.

GANGABUG NAG

Gangabug spring is also situated in Lolab. It is dedicated to Goddess Ganga. In its shape the spring resembles the symbol of Omkar. The spring is believed to be the abode of Goddess Ganga

and is five and a half feet deep. Special Puja is performed on *Gangashtmi* or *Sardashtmi*. On the day Pandit Arzan Bayu, the local priest, cleaned the spring. The cleaning process, according to tradition, was carried by Hindus. After the spring was cleaned, the Hindus brought milk pudding, *Kheer* and the Naveed of *Satyideev*, prepared by them for offering at the spring. *Puja* was performed at the spring. After the exodus of Hindus of Kashmir in 1990, the *Puja* has come to a close.

GANESH NAG

Ganesh Nag springs are two in number and are situated in Lolab, in the district Kupwara. One of these is ten feet by ten feet and four and half feet deep. The other is fourteen feet by ten feet and five feet deep. Both the springs are lined by polished old stones. The branch of a big bren, Alm tree, hangs down to cover the spring like the trunk of an elephant. The branch is about fifteen feet long and has a Ganesh idol in it. There is another spring outside, the enclosure of the two springs, the water of which is used for taking a bath. Around the spring is a Ganesh temple, the roof of which was damaged in 1947, when Pakistan invaded Kashmir. Hindus performed *Havan* on *Ganachodah* day and made an offering of special bread called *Choht*.

DURGA NAG

Durganag or Dardnag is situated in Lolab. The spring is eight feet by ten feet and three feet deep. Hindus performed *Puja* at Durganag on *Durgashtmi* and *Jyethashtmi* day.

MATA HARI NAG

Mata Hari Asthapan is located in a forest in Sewer village of Kupwara. A small rivulet which emanates from the forest forms a spring, eight feet by eight feet. The spring is square in shape with a very old *Shiv Linga* and few other idols in it. Hindus of Sewer performed their daily *Puja* at the spring, where they had holy bath. At the eastern end of Sewer village on a Karewa is a place called Haran, derived from Hari. There is no habitation there. After the harvest, Hindus used to prepare yellow rice from the new crop of rice and offer it at the Hari Asthapan.

NARAN NAG, KUPWARA

Naran Nag is also located in Sewer, in Kupwara district of Kashmir. It has three springs with idols in them. Water comes out from under the idols. These idols were broken during the invasion

of 1947. Naran Nag is situated one kilometer away from Sewer on way to Vernav in Chak village in the Tantrey Mohalla. Hindus worshiped at the spring on Ashtmi and Purnima days.

SITA NAG

A little away from the famous meadow of Tosamaidan and close to the Line of Control in the midst of thick forest is situated the Sita Nag spring. Sita Nag is situated in the picturesque village of Sutti Harran, which is in the central district of Badgam, about sixty kilometers from Srinagar. It is surrounded by Pir Panjal range of mountains. Sutti Harran is believed to be distortion of 'Sita Haran', the abduction of Sita. The legend has it, that during his fourteen year long exile, Sri Ram Chander passed through these woods and stayed here along with Lakshman and Sita. It is said, Sita would bathe in the spring, which consequently got its name from her as Sita Haran. The name later got changed to Sut Haran. Close to the spring is a rock, which, according to the legend, was used by Sita to sit upon. The spring is also said to be the origin of a small lake, under Tosamaidan.

NARAN NAG, BADGAM

Naran Nag spring is also known as Narain Nag. The spring is situated close to the Khag village. There is a local belief that a lake flows underground in Tosamaiden over several miles, it surfaces in the form of Naran Nag. According to local tradition, an ascetic was once passing along the lake of Tosamaidan. He carried a bagful of sheep-dung, which fell from his hand into the lake. Several days later he saw the dung floating on the surface of the Naran Nag, at Khag. To convince himself, the ascetic returned to Tosamaidan and this time sprinkled some turmeric powder in to the lake. A couple of days later, the water in the Naran Nag carried a tinge of turmeric colour. Naran Nag is a place of pilgrimage for Hindus.

SUKH NAG

Sukh Nag is situated close to Tosamaidan in Badgam. Of the many round-the-year-flowing springs, the Sukhnag, originally Sokhanag, the spring of solace is the fountainhead of the Ahij brook. Flowing through the mountain terrain, the Ahij brook transforms itself into a twenty feet high-roaring waterfall at Kanj Zubji, a few miles from Tosamaidan. Before mingling with other small streams downwards, the Ahij brook is further divided into many streams, like Mala Kol, Lar Kol and Sona Maen Kol,

irrigating many villages of Beerwah tehsil. The spring is sacred to the Hindus.

PUSHKAR NAG

Pushkar Nag is in the east of Poshker village between Khag and Ferozpora villages. The historical spring is surrounded by several villages on its three sides while its waters flow to the east. The spring owes its name to the village of its origin that is Pushkar. Kashmiri Hindus offered prayers known as *Diavai Paath* here, during the month of Shravan. The devotees took a bath in the spring. The spring finds a mention in Nilamat Purana, according to which a devotee was spiritually as much benefitted by taking a bath in the spring as by a night-long recitation of the Vedas.

GANDHAK NAG

This is a spring in Darang Khaipora village of Khag block. Its water has a sulphur content. Hence the name Ghandak Nag. People with skin ailments take a bath in the spring for a cure of their skin ailments. The spring is sacred to Hindus who take a bath in it in pursuance of their religious duty.

GANGA JATAN

Ganga Jatan is situated in tehsil of Badgam. On Ganga Astami day every year, devotees came here for taking a bath. It is almost a dry spring but on this particular day, at a particular hour, water gushes out and devotees have the holy bath.

PRAYAG

The Hindus of Kashmir consider the confluence of river Vitasta and the river Sind, at Shadipur, situated at a distance of eighteen kilometers from Srinagar, as the Prayag. The Hindus, from all over India travel to Prayag, the confluence of Yamuna and Ganga at Allahabad to immerse the ashes of their dead. The Hindus of Kashmir immersed the ashes of their dead at the confluence of Vitasta and Sind at Shadipur. In the middle where the river Vitasta and the river Sind meet, there is a small island built in solid masonry.

In the centre of the platform on the island, is an old Chinar tree. At the base of trunk of the Chinar tree, several stone idols are placed in open. A popular legend among the Hindus is that the

Chinar tree has been there from ancient times, but has neither grown with time nor decayed. The Hindus of the adjoining villages believe that the island rises with the rise in the level of water, whenever there are floods and the rivers are swollen.



PRAYAG SHADIPUR

On the eastern bank of Vitasta right opposite to the Prayag, there is a temple dedicated to Vishnu. Hindus, who come to Prayag to immerse the ashes of their dead, perform *Shradha* on the open ground in front of the temple, on the river bank. On rare occasions, when the planetary alignments enter into a phase known as *Ashtagrah*, the Hindus of Kashmir assemble at Prayag and perform the *Shradha* of their ancestors. The occasion is called 'Bod Dashhar' the 'Great Dussehra'. The planetary alignment of 'Bod Dashehar' comes after ten years or twenty years and sometimes after twenty-seven years. 'Bod Dashehar' is believed to have the sanctity of a 'Kumbh Mela' and the Hindus of Kashmir believe that a *Shradha* of their ancestors at the Prayag on 'Bod Deshehar' brings salvation to their dead.

GANGABAL

Gangabal is a lake situated in the high mountains of the Harmukh range in north-east of Kashmir. The lake is at a height of 12000 feet. The Hindus believe that the lake is the abode of Lord Shiva. They believe that the Holy Ganga flows down, Shiva's hair locks-- the Jattas, and forms a divine lake of Gangabal. The Gangabal Lake has been a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus of Kashmir from very ancient times.



GANGABAL

Gangabal is reached from the Ganderbal-Sonamarg road. Wusan is the last village on the Sonamarg road, from where the ascent to Gangabal shrine begins over a hilly track which the pilgrims cover on foot. The first stage that the pilgrims reached from Wusan is known as Ramradhan. It is about five kilometers from Wusan. From Ramradhan the pilgrims reached the second stage of their trek, which is known as Yam Haer. It is about six kilometers from Ramradhan. Yam Haer literally means the "ladder of the abode of Yama, the Lord of Death." Yam Haer is a steep ascent which leads to the third stage of the pilgrimage known as Bramhsar lake. The water of the Bramhsar lake appears to be black. This lake is believed to be very sacred. From here, the pilgrims reach the fourth stage known as Hamsdar. It is a serene and clam place, surrounded by snow-clad mountains. Hamsdar is considered to be the, "heavenly gateway" to Gangabal.

From Hamsdar, a steep path leads to the fifth stage of the pilgrimage known as Sukh Nag. Sukh Nag is a warm water lake, considered sacred. Pilgrims took bath in this holy Nag. Another steep ascent leads to the sixth stage, known as the Dukh Nag. Dukh Nag is a lake of cold water and pilgrims took bath in this Nag as well. From Dukh Nag, the pilgrimage reached Gangabal, after a trek of about five kilometers.

The Gangabal lake is also known among the Hindus of Kashmir as Harmukat Ganga. The Harmukat Ganga is considered by the Hindus of Kashmir as sacred as the Haridwar. The Hindu

pilgrims performed the *shradha* of their dead at Gangabal and immersed the ashes of their dead in the Gangabal lake. They believe, that the immersion of the ashes of their dead in the Gangbal lake and performance of *Shradha* for them at Gangabal led to the salvation of the souls of their ancestors. After the pilgrims immersed the ashes of their dead in the waters of the lake, all of a sudden the water of the lake was thickly filled with numerous underwater organisms which swarmed to the surface of the water. The pilgrimage to Gangabal took a different route for their return. The pilgrims followed the course of Krenk Nadi stream and reached the ancient shrine of Naran Nag. Ancient temples in stone dedicated to Jyesthesha and Bhutesha forms of Shiva, stand on banks of Krenk Nadi, at Naran Nag. Hindus of Kashmir who could not take the ashes of their dead to Gangabal, immersed them in Krenk Nadi as well. The *Shradha* at Gangabal was held on the day of Ganga Ashtami, Ashtami of Bahadun Shulapaksh in Bhadra month every year.

After the Muslim rise to power in Kashmir, Muslim rulers imposed a ban on the pilgrimage. In fact, the practice of the immersion of ashes of the dead ancestors which formed an important part of the ritual culture of the Hindus, ravaged the iconoclast commitment of the Muslims. Legend says, once the ban was lifted and the pilgrimage to Gangabal allowed. A large number of Hindus, reportedly more than ten thousand, who had preserved the ashes of their dead for immersion at Gangabal for years, went on pilgrimage to Gangabal. The weather turned worse and it rained and snowed heavily, while the pilgrimage was in advanced stage. Most of the pilgrims perished in the snow-storm.

After the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistan in 1947, the pilgrimage to Gangabal was discontinued. The pilgrimage was renewed a year before the onset of Muslim militancy in Kashmir. With the exodus of the Hindus from Kashmir in 1990, the pilgrimage was again discontinued.

KAPAAL MOCHAN TIRTHA

Kapaal Mochan is a famous place of pilgrimage at the foot-hills of the Peerpanjal range. It is situated in Digam in the district of Shopian in south Kashmir, about a mile to the west of the Shopian township on the left bank of Rambi Aara, a tributary of Vitasta. Digam is the corrupt form of Dvigram.

The origin and significance of Kapaal Mochan Tirtha is narrated in the Kapaal Mochan Mahatmaya. Kapaal Mochan is a place of pilgrimage in Kashmir and Kalhana has made a reference to the pilgrimage in Rajatrangni.

There are some ruins of old buildings around the place. The shrine is also known as Nagbal due to presence of a spring there. There is a thousand eyed "Shiv linga" on the elevated platform on the west bank of the spring, known as Kapaaleshwara Shiva. A temple is constructed over the *linga* without a roof.

According to the Kapaal Mochan Mahatmaya, "once Karma Vishnu and Karma Brahma were jealous of the greatness of Lord Shiva. The Lord guessed their jealousy. To dispel their illusion, he formed a huge *Jyotir Linga* without beginning and an end. It was limitless in diameter also. Lord Shiva asked both Brahma and Vishnu to fathom its two ends. Brahma set out to know its upper end and Vishnu its lower end. Both of them tried hard but were unable to find the two ends. Vishnu returned dejected and prayed to Shiva. He admitted that he could not find the ends of the *Jyotir Linga*. Meanwhile, Brahma spoke untruth that he found out the upper end of *Jyotir Linga*. He brought two witnesses, cow and Ketki flower to prove his point. On being asked whether Brahma really reached the upper most end of *Jyotir Linga*, the cow nodded her head in affirmation, at the same time moving her tail to refute Brahma's claim. Ketki also supported Brahma's claim. Lord Shiva lost His temper on this lie. He cursed both cow and Ketki for giving false evidence. Ever since the cow's tail but not the head is worshipped and Ketki flower is banned in the worship of deities. Still the fury of the Shiva did not subside. He cut Brahma's fifth head and used the Skull as a pot. After some time, he became conscious of his action. He had committed a sacrilege, murder of a Brahmin—*Brahmatya*. He had to perform expiation to ward off the sin. He visited many places of pilgrimage but the skull did not fall from his hands. The sacrilege followed Him in the guise of an ogress. At the end of 12 years of pilgrimages, he reached Varanasi and there he got rid of sacrilege. Then he bathed at Manikarm. There the skull dropped from his hand while riding his bull and Rudraganas. He went to Himalaya. Travelling hither and thither, Shiva reached Shopiayan. The sacrilege that had dropped from his hand at Varanasi reappeared. He wondered how it happened again and became furious. He spurred his bull to run fast. The bull ran at a furious speed. One of his cloven hoofs struck into a rock. He pulled it out with a great force. The moment he did so, the other hoof penetrated deep into earth due to great

pressure. He pulled out the hoof again with full force and a spring oozed out from the ditch. The Sun also appeared to salute Shiva. Sacrilege disappeared and the skull bone also fell from Shiva's hand."

The *Mahatmaya* further says, "The Sun praised the glory of the Lord and requested Him that the spring formed by the hoof of the bull be called Kapaal Mochan because Brahma's skull bone and the sacrilege disappeared here. Also it should become a famous pilgrimage then on." Lord Shiva granted the boon, that those who die in childhood etc would get deliverance from sin, evil spirits and lower births. The place got the name Dvigram because the skull of Brahma was dropped, at the place a second time."

Kapaal Mochan is a place of pilgrimage where the *shradha* of those who die young is performed. Kapaal Mochan Mahatmaya gives in detail how and for whom the *Shradha* is performed. The Mahatmaya is in the form of a conversation between Bhairva and Bhairvi. It says, "Those dead persons who suffer in hell and are tortured by the messengers of *Yama* remain as evil spirits. Those who are born in the lowest species of life like animal, insect, bird etc. after death, get deliverance from such births etc. after the religious rites at Kapaal Mochan."

People perform *Shradha* at Kapaal Mochan for the salvation of their dead forefathers, relatives, friends and known persons. In this regard the Mahatmaya says, "The rituals of performing *Shradha* of such dead souls are laid down in *Garuda Purana*. Before the *Shradha* is performed, the pilgrims take bath in the sacred waters of Kapaal Mochan spring. Then, the *Shardha* of the child is performed. After that the, *Shardha* of the older people is performed. After that the pilgrims worship Kapaaleshwara *Linga* with great devotion.

FOOT NOTES

1 GANGODBHEDA TIRTHA

Abu-Ul-Fazal in Mirabilla of Kashmir in Ain-I-Akbari states, "that near Sukhroh is a low hill, on the summit of which is a fountain, which flows throughout the year and is a pilgrimage for the devout. Snow does not fall on this Spur."

2 SODARA TIRTHA

Regarding the sanctity of the holy spring, R C Agarwal, comments, "the sanctity of the tank or Pushkarni was so overwhelming that in the later period it was used for performing rituals and became a tirtha initself, which in subsequent historical writing came to be known as Sodara tirtha." R.C Kak writes in his 'Ancient Monuments of Kashmir', "its cool, delicious water, perhaps contributed to some extent to its sanctity."

Kalhana notes about the religious significance of this region as, "that even to this day, drops of Sandal ointment offered by gods are to be seen at Nandiksetra, the permant residence of Shiva." And to this Stein, hundreds of years later writes, "the worship of Shiva Bhutesa, --- the lord of beings, localized near the sacred sites of Mount Harmukh has played an important part in ancient religion of Kashmir."

Religious scholar, Pandit Sahibram, refers to the antiquity of Naran Nag in his monumental work, Tirtha Samgraha, in his notes on Harmukt Ganga pilgrimage. He writes;

Tatah (the Harmukat Ganga Lake) Pratyavryta Vangatakhyapradse (Vangath)

Prathamam Bhutesvara Pujam Vidhya Sodarnage Yastim Ksiptra Visrjya Pratyayat.

TRISANDHEYA TIRTHA

Kalhana mentions in Rajatarangini that at Trisandheya, "There the Goddess Saindheya produces on an arid hill side, water which serves as an indication of the presence of merit and absence of sin."

According to Stein, the spring is supposed to flow intermittently in the month of Jaishtha and Ashara three times in a day and during night and has an account of analogy thus presented with the three fold recitation of the Gayatri (Saindheya).

Bernier, French traveller visited the spring in May 1665. He mentions that the small spring which is usually dry for greater part of the year has owing to the curious phenomenon, always enjoyed great fame as one of the wonders of the Valley.

Abul Fazal in Ain-I-Akbari, "Near the town of Brang is a long defile in which is a pool seven yards square and as deep as a man's stature. It is regarded as a place of great sanctity. Strange to say it is dry during eleven months but in the Divine month of Urdi-bihisht (April), water bubbles forth from two springs. First in one corner of it is a cavity like a mortar called Send brari. When this becomes full, the spring rises in another corner called Saphth rishi. From these two sources the pool runs over. Sometimes it boils upto three hours and at a time for only a second. Then it begins to decrease till not a drop remains. At three periods of the day, viz., morning noon and evening, this rise occurs. Various flowers are thrown in as offerings to either spring and after the reflux of the water, the flowers of the each votary are found in their respective springs."

4 TAKSAK NAG

It is said, Saffron has originated from Taksak Nag and its cultivation has spread in its neighbourhood. Abdul Fazal records the facts that this spring is held to be the place where from saffron originated and flourished in the neighbourhood. During the reign of Akbar, the cultivators of saffron worshipped at this spring at the beginning of each spring season. To get a good crop, it was customary to pour cow's milk in the spring. As a local divinity, Taksak nag retained sanctity and importance for long with cultivators.

5 GAUTAM NAG

Hindus all over, particularly those of Anantnag protested. Shri. Madhav Dass, the mahant, Sanatan Dharam Prabhandak Committee (Anantnag), All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference (Srinagar) All India Kashmiri Pandit Conference (Srinagar), All India India Kashmiri Samaj (Delhi), and Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi, protested in against the decision of the State Government. The representatives of Kashmiri Pandit organizations of the valley met Governer and Chief Minister of the State. Another delegation of All India Kashmiri Samaj and Kashmiri Samiti Delhi, also met the Chief Minister in Delhi. They apprised him of the Gautam Nag episode and continued feeling of insecurity by the minorities in the valley. The Chief Minster was requested, to take immediate action to restore the confidance of Kashmiri Pandits.

CHAPTER V KUL DEVIS

SARADA

1

The holy shrine of Sarada is situated in a village known as Shardi on the banks of the river Kishen Ganga, around one hundred sixty kilometers from Srinagar, to the west of the district Kupwara. Kishen Ganga is now in the territories, under the occupation of Pakistan. Before the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan in 1947, the Sarada temple was under the management of the Hindus of Kashmir. The Sarada temple is dedicated to Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning and Knowledge. Nilmat Purana mentions that in ancient Kashmir, "there was a religious tradition to worship books in the temple of Durga." In Durga-Saptshati, the shrine has been described as; "Sarada is higher knowledge, exalted speech, Bharti, Organ of expression, Goddess of wisdom, bestower of desires, essence of Vedas and controller of intellect".



SARADA TEMPLE

The temple was once surrounded by an eleven foot high wall. The temple stood in the middle of the enclooure. A flight of steps leads to the top of the terrace, where the temple stands. The steps appear to be twisted, as if they were battered by an earthquake. The stairs are now in rubble. Walls of the temple are now

completely dilapidated. In the architectural design, the temple resembled the other temples in Kashmir. Constructed of stone, the Sarada temple stands on a plinth, which is twenty four feet in length. From the ground level, the plinth is five feet high. The door of the temple opens to the west. A flight of steps which is four feet wide, leads to a verandah on which the door of temple opens. The verandah is four feet wide and is supported by two pillars. The enclosure inside the temple is around twelve feet and three inches square. In the middle of the enclosure is a stone slab, which is believed to cover a 'Kund'--spring. The stone slab is seven feet in length and six feet in width and has a thickness of half a foot. Some chronicles mention that in ancient times there was an idol of Sarada carved in wood, inside the enclosure.

In ancient Kashmir, Sarada was a great centre of learning, which developed into an institution of learning almost equivalent to a university. Aspirants and scholars came from various places in Kashmir and the other parts of India to study at Sarada, where a Gurukul existed. Known as 'Sarada Peeth,' it became a place of learning, where people studied various schools of Hindu philosophy. Max Muller, the German Indologist who succeeded in collecting many important Sharda manuscripts from Shardi, wrote about Sarada, "it was the only Sarada learning centre in India where there was arrangement for teaching Indian philosophy, which we call six systems of Indian philosophy. A prestigious education centre based on Gurukul system flourished here. When and who built this grand and majestic temple at Sarada is not known."

When Adi Shankaracharya visited Kashmir, he visited Sarada Peeth as well. It is believed that he had long discourses with the learned teachers at Sarada. In many disputations he vanquished the local scholars. It is believed that after having done so, he seated himself in the Sarada temple. The legend has that he composed 'Panchstavi,' in praise of the Goddess at Sarada shrine. In the eleventh century, Sarada Peeth was at the peak of its glory. Bilhan, the poet-historian of Kashmir wrote in his description of Pravaraspura, then capital of Kashmir, about the state of excellance to which Sarada Peeth, centre of learning had achieved. A century later, the Jain scholar, Hem Chandra visited Sarada Peeth. He mentioned the temple of Sarada in his treatise, 'Prabhavakacharita.' In the early period of the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir as well, Sarada, attracted many pilgrims. Jonaraja, who compiled the history of Kashmir during the early rule of the Sultans, mentions that Zain-ul-Abdin, visited Sarada in 1422

A.D. Abul Fazal makes a mention of the Sarada temple, but without any reference to the centre of learning which flourished there. He writes, "At two days distance from Hayahom is the river named Madhumati, which flows from the Darda Country. On its banks is a stone temple called Sarada, dedicated to Durga and regarded with great veneration. On every eighth *tithi* (Ashtami) of the bright moon, it begins to shake and produces the most extraordinary effect."

Sarada Mahatmaya narrates the legend of the origin of the Sarada *tirtha* and describes the various stages of the pilgrimage to the Sarada temple. The authorship of the *Sarada Mahatmaya* is not known. However, it is believed that the *Sarada Mahatmaya* was composed by Madhavacharya, a staunch devotee of Adi Shankaracharya. According to *Sarada Mahatmaya*, Muni Shandalya, son of Matanga, was practising austerities in order to obtain the sight of Goddess Sarada, who is Shakti embodying three separate manifestations. He was advised to proceed to jungles of Syamala (Kupwara district). There at Ghusa, Mahadevi, Consort of Shiva, appears and promises to show Herself in Her true form as Shakti in Sarada Van. The Goddess vanishes from his sight at Hayasrama, the present village of Hayahoma, northeast of Ghusa. The Muni then proceeds to a spring known as Krsnaga, the source of origin of Kishen Ganga, in which he takes bath. Thereupon, half his body becomes golden, representing symbolic libration from darkness. The place is usually designated by local Brahmins, as Sona-Drang (Suvarnardhangaka). Muni Shandalya then ascends the mountain range to the north and sees dance of Goddess in a mountain meadow, known as Rangavatica, which lies below the pass by which route leads across Shamsabari Range towards Kishen Ganga. He then arrives at Teja Van, the residence of Rishi Gautama on the bank of Kishen Ganga. The *Mahatmaya* then relates how the sage after crossing a hill sees on the east the God Ganesha and arrives in the Sarada Vana. After reciting a hymn in praise of Her, triple form of Sarada, Narada or Saraswati and Vaghdevi, Goddess revealed Herself to the Muni at the scared spot and rewarded his long austerities by inviting him to Her residence at Sirahsila.

The legend has it that Pitras then approached Muni Shandalya and requested him to perform their *Sharada*. On his taking water from 'Maha Sindhu' for the purpose of *Tarpana* rite, half of its water turns honey and forms the stream now known as Madhumati. Ever since, *Sharda* of *Pitras* are performed at the Sangam of Sindhu and Madhumati.

A Puranic legend is also associated with the Sarada temple. "After nectar distribution following Sagar Manthan, the left over nectar, along with its *Kalash* was taken by Sarada Devi, after emerging in six armed figure, went straight to the place now known Shardi. Placing the *Kalash* there, changed Herself in a plain stone and covered the *Kalash* with it. Thus, the slab of stone became the object of worship." Later a temple was constructed over it.



SARADA TEMPLE SIDE VIEW

A pilgrimage used to be made to Sarada temple every year till 1947, after which it was discontinued, due to the invasion of Kashmir. Sarada *Mahatmaya*, describes the route of the pilgrimage as well as the various stages of the pilgrimage. According to the *Mahatmaya*, the pilgrimage commenced on 4th *Shudi* of *Bhadarpada*, the month of *Bhadon*, of the Samvat era. The pilgrims reach Drang from the various parts of Kashmir where they take a bath before they embarked on their pilgrimage. From Drang, the pilgrimage proceeded to Ghusa. At Ghusa, the pilgrims visit a small grove of walnut trees and Chinar trees situated by side of the Kamil river. The place where the grove is situated is known as Rangavar, Rangvatica of the ancient times. From Rangavar, the pilgrimage proceeded Dudinial across the Sitalvan mountain pass. Dudinial is situated on the left bank of the Krishen Ganga river. From Dudinial the pilgrims proceed along the river, ascending its left bank to reach Teja Van, in the evening on 6th *Shudi* of *Bhadon*. TejaVan is on the northern slope of the hill range, which is presumed to be the *Ashram* of Rishi Gautma, where Muni Shanday performed penance. The pilgrims halt for the night at Teja Van. During the night, the pilgrims recite various hymns in praise of the Goddess.

On 7th Sudhi, the third day of the pilgrimage, pilgrims cross the Kishan Ganga river. Then the pilgrims move eastwards on the track along the northern bank of the Kishen Ganga river. After a day's trek the pilgrimage reached the Sarada temple in the evening. The next day on the 8th Shudi, the pilgrims take bath and then proceed to Sarada temple for worshipping the Goddess. After having offered worship to the Goddess Sarada at the temple, the pilgrims descended upon the bank of Madhumati to perform *Shrada*, of their ancestors. The Sarada *Ashtami* coincides with Ganga *Ashtami* also known as Radha *Ashtami*.

Sarada continued to remain a great centre of learning till Kashmir came under the rule of the Muslim Sultans in early fourteenth century. After the advent of the Muslim rule, the importance of the Sarada temple waned. Jonaraja, mentions in his chronicle, that Zain-ul-Abidin visited the shrine in 1422 AD. By then the Gurukul had disappeared. Jonraja's description of the Sultans visit amply proves that. With the conquest of Kashmir by the Sikhs in 1819, the persecution to which the Hindus were subjected during the Muslim rule, came to a close. The Dogra ruler, Maharaja Gulab Singh, who founded the Jammu and Kashmir state in 1846, ordered the repair and restoration of the Sarada temple. Gulab Singh instructed colonel Gundu, the Ziladar of Muzaffarabad, to erect a shingle roof over the temple. Evidently, the roof of the temple must have fallen or been pulled down during the Muslim rule. The Maharaja also settled a small bounty of seven rupees "chilki" per mensem on the family of Gotheng Bramins who claim the hereditary guardianship of the shrine. According to tradition of the Gotheng Bramins, it was only after the establishment of the Dogra rule that the temple of Sarada was once more opened for regular pilgrimage. During Dogra rule, Sarada temple regained its fame and became a great centre of pilgrimage for the Hindus of India. Pilgrimage used to be made to the Sarada temple every year till the year 1947, when the whole region was occupied by Pakistan.

Pandit Sona Lal Thusu, who was originally a resident of the village Liderawan, established a shop in Shardi village in 1922. Sona Lal was witness to the annual pilgrimage to the Sarada temple. He has given an account of the holy springs and dilapidated temple sights in the vicinity of the Shardi village. In an interview Sona Lal Thusu recounted, "There were 60 springs in Liddewan. Villages like Zirhama (40), Mirhama (20), Avura (15) have many more Nags (spring). There are also ruins of old

temples in Lidderwan. Maharudra's nag and Mukhsar are other springs of veneration. On Saptmi, water comes out in the form of pearls from Mukhsar (ancient Mukhtsar). This spring is eight by eight feet and three feet deep. It has a stone embankment on all sides and the face of a stone has an old inscription of 'AUM'. Lord Rama is believed to have taken a bath here. At Avura, there is a groove having great sanctity, known as Rishivar. Many of the springs have old stone idols. Similarly, close to Dunial there is a place called Rishinakh. Many Rishis in olden times offered penance in this jungle. Near the hill, old pottery and *Havan* items are found. Narda is just five miles away from Shardi. Nobody can reach its top i.e. Kailsheri. It is said, there used to be a spring at the top. Not many pilgrims venture to visit Narda."

Pandit Sona Lal has given a full description of the visit of famous Kashmiri Saint Mathura Devi, who visited Sarada Shrine in 1933. Swami Nandal also stayed in Sarada and had his own Dharmashala, close to fort. He left Sarada in 1947. He has given details of others who have visited the shrine while he was there. He further adds, in 1940, a lady Sadhu lost her way while going from Dunial to Sarada via Tejan. It was already dusk and she was frightened as the road ahead lay through gorges and cliffs. It is said, Goddess Sarada appeared dressed as a Gujjar lady and guided her right upto the fort. Then she suddenly disappeared.

Sarada Mahatmaya mentions two other places in Kashmir, connected with the worship of Goddess Sarada. It mentions the shrine of Sarada Kund, situated in the village Tsatsa, close to Harvan, on the outskirts of the Srinagar city. Tsatsa village is one and half mile away from the north-east corner of the Dal Lake. Stein has recorded the Tsatsa Sarada. He says; "owing to the place being so near to the city and easily approached by boat, large crowds of pilgrims assemble from Srinagar to pay their devotion to Sarada." This spring was visited on Sarada Ashtami day only.

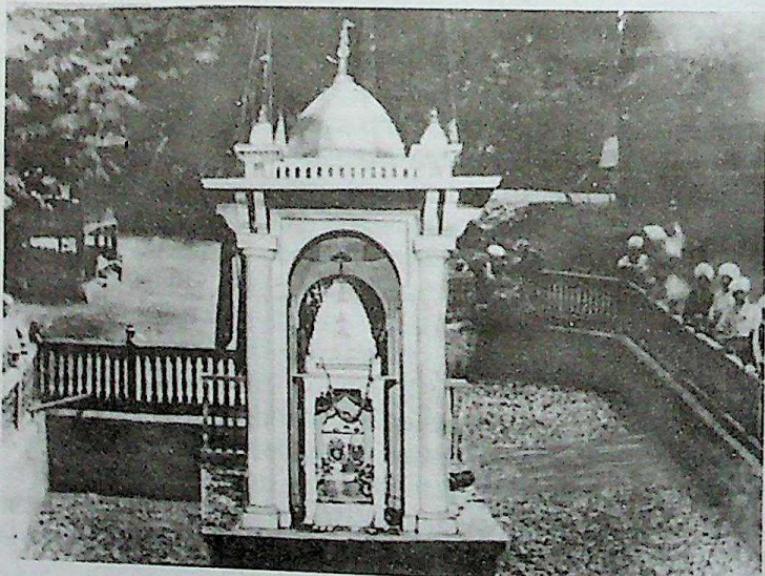
The other Sarada shrine, of which the mention is made in the Sarada Mahatmaya is at Khuyhom. The Sarada shrine at Khuyhom, Badipore, is recorded by Pandit Sahib Ram, in his 'Tiratha Samgraha'. While Sahib Ram describes its location in village Kulyandi, Prof. Buhler, the German indologist, mentions the place as Horil also in Khuyhom. Hassan Khuyhami, a Muslim historian of Kashmir who belongs to Khuyham, refers to another place, in Kashmir where Hindu devotees assembled to worship Goddess Sarada. He notes, "In Yachkoot, near Budgam and slightly away from Pandit locality is a groove of five or eight

Chinnars. In the hollow of a Chinar is housed the idol of Sarada Goddess. A clay wall encloses the Chinar groove. This served as a local temple. On Chitra Ashtami and Navmi, Pandits of Yachkoot and surrounding villages performed *Havan*. Pandits describe the place as *asthapan* of Sarada Mata."

MAHARAJNI

2

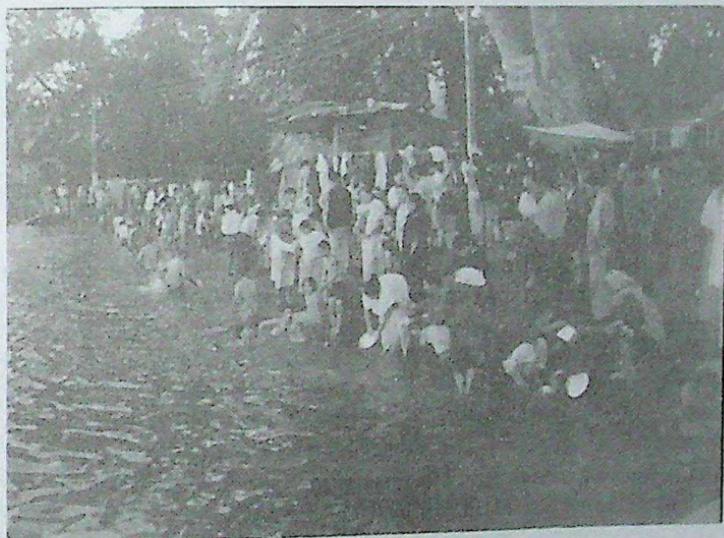
The shrine of Raginya Bhagwati, also known as the shrine of Kheer Bhavani, at Tulmul, is one of the most revered Hindu temple of Kashmir. The shrine is dedicated to the worship of *Bhavani*, the Divine Mother. Tulmul is situated at a distance of twenty four kilometers from Srinagar, towards the north of the city. During the Hindu era, Tulmul was a place of great learning. The holy spring in the middle of which the temple of Maharajni is placed, is situated on the bank of a branch of the river Sindh. In Nilmata Purana, the river is mentioned as 'Tsandara Baga'. There are many references of Tulmul in the Rajatarangni. The Ragina Kavach---a psalm in praise of the Divine Mother included in Sanskrit work of Rudrya Mala Tantra substantiates that Tulamulla is an ancient and popular place of pilgrimage among Kashmiri Hindus. Dr. Bhullar traced some sixteen manuscripts from Brngisha Samhita, related to the holy places of Kashmir. One of them is about Tulmul. The Samhita mentions in detail about the sacred shrine of *Bhavani*.



MAHARAJNI TEMPLE INSIDE VIEW (TULMUL)

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Shri Parmananda Research Institute, Srinagar, in their publication *Shri Shri Maha—Rajni Pradurbhavah*, 'A leaf from Brngisha Samhita 'has given detailed description of the shrine. The origin of this temple has been described in the last chapter of Brngisha Samhita. It is noted that Pulasty the father of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, was originally from Kashmir. Ravana worshiped the Maharajni but in the form of Shyama. The Divine Mother bestowed Ravana, many boons. At the time of the war with Sri Ram, Ravana tried to invoke the blessing of Goddess by offering her various kinds of sacrifices. Thereupon the Goddess cursed him and ordered Hanuman to take her on the back of Anant serpent to Satisar, Kashmir. Thus the Goddess came to Kashmir with 360 serpents, Nagas. The night when the Divine Mother came to Kashmir, came to be called Rajni-Ratri. The goddess is worshipped as Maharajni.



MAHARAJNI TEMPLE OUTSIDE VIEW (TULMUL)

For a long time the *Tirtha* at Tulmul remained under flood-waters. There is a legend that, the Divine Mother appeared in a dream to Pandit Govind Joo Gadoo and he was ordered to visit Tulmul. He arranged a boat from Sowura Ghat and went to the abode of Divine Mother with a number of earthen vessels filled with milk. When he found the spring, he poured milk into it. Perhaps for

this reason this shrine is known as Kheer Bhavani. Another version is that a pious Brahman, Krishna Pandit, found mention of the holy spring in a book called 'Brihad Katha'. Later he had a vision in which he was informed by an angel that the holy spring of Mata Maharajni lay among the swamps of Tulumulla village. He was further advised to move towards the north east direction following a serpent from Shadipor and this actually happened. Shri Krishna Pandit marked the place where the snake stopped. Then he moved in an oddly rectangular direction. The space thus covered, was also demarcated. The swamp around the holy spring was filled up. Thereafter, a stone temple was constructed. One day Krishna Pandit was performing Puja, a *Boj Patra*, birch-bark leaf appeared floating in the spring. A *Shaloka* was written on the leaf. The *Shaloka* read; "I, prostrate to Supreme Goddess Maharajni who is lustrous having around twelve suns and seated on lion's throne, wrapped by the serpents, not visible to the material eyes but realized by spiritualist".

Shri Krishna Pandit composed a poem of as many stanzas as there were letters in the 'Shaloka' and this poem 'Rajani Sotra' is still existant. Although it is recorded that the discovery of the holy spring was made on Ashara Sapthami, 7th day of bright fortnight in June-July, but devotees throng this place on every 8th day Ashtami, and an annual festival is held on every Jyestha Sukla Ashtami.

The holy spring has an irregular septagonal shape with the apex called *Paad* situated to the east. The northern and southern sides are longer than the western side, which is called *Sher* or head. It is shaped like *AUM* in the Sharada script. In the centre of the spring the Maharajni temple stands. The spring is situated in the centre of an island round which the Gang Khai, a canal from Sindh makes a circuit. The spring is said to be surrounded by 360 springs. Most of these are covered with bushes and silted up. In 1902, Pandit Ved Lal Dhar cleared the sedimentation of the main spring. The digging unearthed an ancient temple in the center built of large sculptured white stone with superb artistic features and marvelous images of deities. The whole shrine was repaired by Maharaja Partap Singh, the Dogra ruler in 1907. Maharajni is the Isht Devi of Kashmiri Hindus.

According to Hindu scriptures, Hindu deities are expressed in three manifestations; (1) ionic form, wooden, stone or metal (2) Mantra, sound form (3) Yantra, a mystic symbol. The deities are usually worshiped in ionic forms. In Tantric culture, the devotees concentrate on mystic symbol or Yantra, geometrical abode of the

deity and are supposed to acquire superphysical powers. The Yantra is drawn by using the dot, Bindu, the straight lines, the triangle and the circle. Tantrikism is a way of worship. In Tantra Shastra, Maharajni has a prescribed diagram, Chakram with her Shaktis. Mantra is a sound form of the deity. It is chanted to invoke the deity in the mind, generally known as *Dyanam*. According to Maharajni Pradurbhavah the Mantra of Maharajni is a 15-worded Mantra. An appropriate ritual has to be followed while reciting the Mantra.

Shrines dedicated to the worship of Kheer Bhavani, are found at a number of places in Kashmir. The shrines are marked by the presence of the holy spring and a place of worship dedicated to *Bhavani*.

KHEER BHAVANI, KHIRM

Khirm is a village situated in tehsil Bijberara of Kashmir. In the village there is a holy spring, dedicated to the worship of Maharajni. Near the holy spring is a chinar tree and a Dharmshala, built by Hindus of Khirnama. Late Moti Lal Brahamchari used to perform *Havan*—Vedic yagya, at Khrim during auspicious days of the *Navratras* every year.

KHEER BHAVANI, MANI GAM

The village Manigam is situated above Lar on the right bank of river Sindh, which drains in Anchar Lake, at Dodarhama, close to Ganderbal township. It is twenty kilometers away from Srinagar. The original name of Mani Gam is Maya Gram. In the village, there are no ancient ruins. At the foothill there is a heap of tiles about which Aurel Stein records that a temple existed there. On the path enroute to Mahind Marg, there is a pond enclosed in stone-work with an inlet in the north. This spot is now called Vata-Shun.

Harmukh Mahatamya refers to the spring as 'Acharna Nag'. Hindus of Kashmir, regard it as holy shrine of Kheer Bhavani. A mela is held at the spring on 12th of the bright-half of *Shrawan* every year.

KHEER BHAVANI, TIKKAR

Tikkar is a village situated in the district Kupwara of Kashmir. The shrine of Maharajni is situated amidst a forest on

Kupwara-Kralpora road. Inside the shrine there is a holy spring, in the middle of which is a marble Murti of Rajini Bhawani. There is a covered enclosure for worship and a dharamshalla in the shrine. Close by is a cold water well. Sadhus and pilgrims stayed in the Dharamshalla before the exodus of Hindus of Kashmir in 1990.

On the adjacent hill there is a 'Trimurti' in marble, representing Swami Lal ji, Swami Nand Lal ji and Kral Bab in an Ashram. Around the temple, there are Walnut trees in abundance. Annual Havan used to be performed on Jeth Astami by the devotees.

RAGNIYA TEMPLE, RAITHAN

Raithan is situated to the north-west of Srinagar, thirty two kilometers away. Near the village, between Son-Moi river and the road, there is a large stone which the Kashmiri Hindus, have been worshipping from ancient times as a form of Goddess Ragina.

In the year 1975, Hindus of the area decided to have a Dharamshala and a wall around the shrine. During digging near the Ragniya Aakar, some stone murtis were found. A specimen of wood-carving and a foundation of an old temple were also unearthed. A three-faced, graceful green stone image of Vishnu, was found. Besides, charcoal mixed in earth was also found.

MAHARAJNI, MANZGAAM

4

Manzgam is a large village in Kulgam district of Kashmir. It is situated at the foot of a hill known as Naar and is on the right side of river Vaishav. Originally the village was known as Madhya Grama, because of a large spring (Nag) by the name of Madhya at that place. By the passage of time the spring dried up and the name Madhya Gram broke up into Manzgam. Manz in Kashmiri language means the middle and Gam means village. The Neelmat Purana refers to the spring and mentions its name as Madhya Nag. The Maharajni, holy shrine is located in the middle of the Naar hill in Manzgam village. It is approached by a *Kachcha* zig-zag road. The village is well connected from Anantnag and also from Shopian to Aharabal. In the shrine, there is a spring, which has a temple constructed over it. The sanctum sanctorum is enclosed by iron railings. There is some space all around the spring inside the temple for devotees to pray and offer milk, flowers and grains of rice to the Bhawani. The water of the spring has a small outlet towards the slop of the hill on the left. A small stream of pure water comes down by a sandalwood, Chandan tree. The Chandan tree is

a unique tree in the whole of the forest. This tree has been named as *Chandan Kul* for ages. The pilgrims pray at this tree as well. A waterfall is made for pilgrims to bathe. A bath in the stream is considered to be very auspicious. An annual pilgrimage used to take place on Jyesth Ashtami.

A wooden two storeyed Dharamshalla stood on the right side of the pathway leading to the temple. There were two other structures on the right side of the holy spring, the one where the Samadhi of Baba Ramgiri stood and other for a Sadhu who lived there to worship the deity and look after the temple complex. In the wake of terrorist violence in 1990, the Sadhu was killed and the whole temple complex burnt by terrorists.



MAHARAJNI, MANZGAAM

BADRAKALI

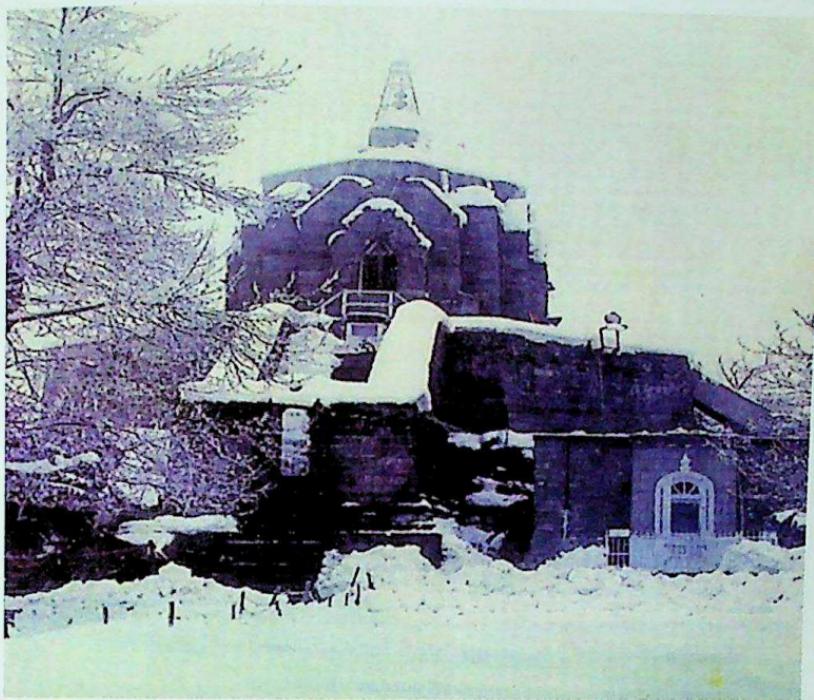
The ancient shrine of Badrakali is situated about eight kilometers from the township of Handwara in Kashmir. In between the Shrine and the Handwara township, there is a large village of Hindus known as Wadipora. Goddess Badrakali is Ishta Devi of Hindus of Wadipora, in particular and Hindus of Kashmir in general. There is a legend that Goddess Kali came from Bengal in the pursuit of demons, whom the Goddess destroyed at Handwara. The shrine is considered to be a *Seda Peeth* and it is believed that the Goddess Badrakali would bless every one who used to come to this *asthanam*.

Before the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir in 1990, two festivals were organized at the shrine every year, on Ram Navmi and Maha Navmi. On these two occasions large number of pilgrims would arrive from all over Kashmir to participate in the *Puja* and worship at the shrine of Badrakali.

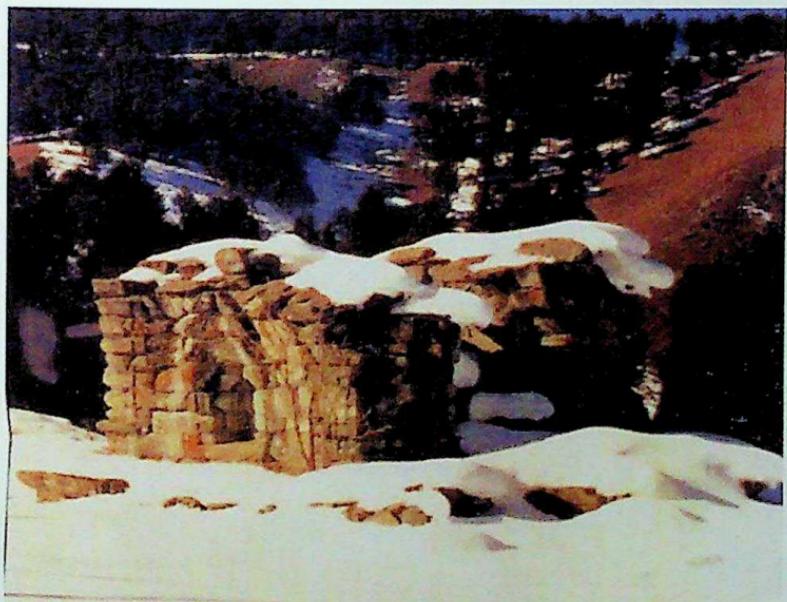


BADRAKALI

The temple is situated in a thick forest covered with trees like deodar, kail, budul and other trees. The whole structure of the temple is of deodar wood with a tin roof. In the middle of the temple, there is a grand deodar tree, about 1000 years old, and protrudes out of the roof of the temple. Inside the temple, and close to the trunk of the tree is placed the huge statue of Goddess Badrakali. The idol of Badarkali is six feet in height. A lion carved out of brass stands adjacent to the statue of the Goddess Badarkali. The idol of Goddess Badarkali is believed to be natural. Inside the temple are placed the idols of Ganesh, Goddess Durga, Goddess Lakshmi, and Goddess Sarsawati. The *Murtib* of Goddess Badrakali is always painted with *Sindoor* and is wearing red *chuni* and several garlands of flowers. The deodar tree in the temple is full of *Naervan*, *Moli* tied on it. The pilgrims used to tie the *Moli* to get their wishes fulfilled.



SHANKARACHARYA TEMPLE IN WINTER



DRANG TEMPLE IN WINTER

CC-O. Agam Kanya Digital Preservation Foundation



MAHARAJNI TEMPLE TULMUL



ZYEATHA DEVI TEMPLE
CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation

SHIVA BHAGVATI

The abode of Shiva Bhagvati is at Akingam in south Kashmir, about twenty kilometers from district headquarters of Anantnag in Brang Pargana, in the midst of lush green jungle with pine trees. The picturesque village is situated on banks of river Brangi. Inside the village there is a shrine of Shiva Bhagvati, which is locally called Devi Bal. There is a *Shila*, huge stone engraved, which is believed to be kneeled in prostration beneath the ground. There is a *Pranali* around the *Shila* and this huge *Shila* is smeared with *Sindoor*, vermillion. Shiva Bhagvati *Asthapan* at Akingam is an ancient one and is the only one of its kind. Shiva Bhagvati is Ishet Devi of Kashmiri Hindus.



SHIVA BHAGVATI TEMPLE

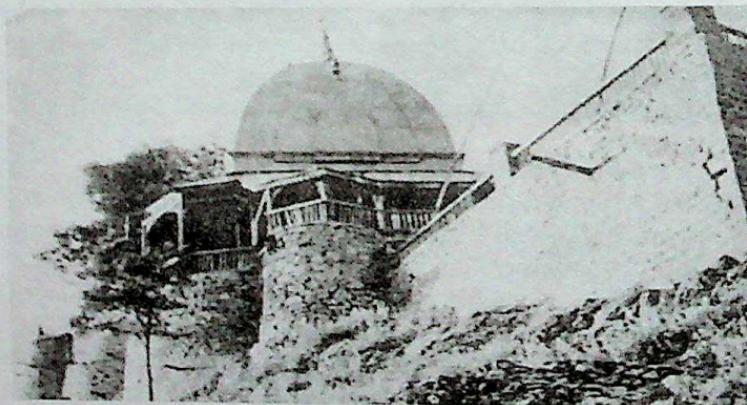
There are two main occasions in the year when devotees from every nook and corner of Kashmir swarm to the shrine. Devotees from Bindu, Kokernag, Bidder, Nor Vatnar, Softa Shali, Irakimu, Sagam, Kandiwara, Muhrpora, Matpora, Bonpora, Achadal, Thagiwara, Anantnag, Brah, Toor, Ranipora, Nawgam, Utrasu, Brariangan, Chhatergul, Panchalthan, Kootihear and Gosanigund, come to pay their obeisance in the sanctum sanctorum as these villages are nearer to this shrine. In the spring season, a big fair attracts huge numbers of devotees on *Shukla Paksha Navam*, when devotees throng Devi Bal with their offering of *Tahar*, yellow cooked rice. In autumn, again on *Ashwin Shukla Paksha Navam* a fair is held on a massive scale, *Bhajan Mandlies* resonate and hymns are chanted in the praise of Goddess Shiva. There are Rishi homes adjacent to Devi Bal, where *Saatvik Aahar*

is prepared for the devotees. After performing Puja etc, these devotees go to Rishi homes and have Naveed and return to their respective homes.

SHARIKA

3

The sacred shrine of Sharika Bhagwati is situated on Hari Parbat hill, in the heart of Srinagar city. It is one of the oldest Shakta shrines of Kashmir. A legend is associated with the Hari Parbat shrine. A powerful demon, Jalodabhava lived in the waters over the place where the hill is. The demon harassed and troubled the Rishis. The Rishis prayed to Goddess Parvati to free them from the demon. The Goddess assumed the form of a bird called *Har* in Kashmiri, *Myna* and dropped a celestial pebble which she was carrying in her beak, at the spot where Jalodabhava the water demon was lying. The pebble grew into a hillock, pinning the demon down forever. The Goddess in grateful memory of deliverance took up her abode at the hill-top and is worshiped as Sharika Bhagwati. The hill is called Hari Parbat --- the hill of Sharika. The legend goes that, the miracle happened on the day of Ashad Shukla Paksh Navami, known in Kashmiri language as Har Navam. The Hindus of Kashmir celebrate this day as birthday of Sharika Bhagwati with great reverence and devotion



SHRINE OF SHARIKA BAGVATI

The shrine is the abode of Mahashakti--- Divine Mother Goddess Durga. The eighteen-armed Goddess Sharika, Ashtadashbuja, is regarded one of the Isht Devi of Kashmiri Hindus. In Tantra Shastra, Para-Shakti is known as Tripurasundri.

In Chakreshwari shrine, at Hari Parbat, Sharika is manifest in the form of Chakreshwari, symbolized by Sri Chakram, which is engraved upon the vertical holy rock, known as Shilla, located in the middle of the western face of the Chakreshwari shrine. The Shilla is smeared with Sindhoor. The Sri Chakram is a symbolic representation of the cosmic union of Lord Shiva and Shakti. It is a famous Yantra. A verse from 'Rudra Yamala Tantra' describes Sri Chakram as; "The point, the group of 8 triangles, two groups 10 triangles, the group of 14 triangles, 8 petalled lotus, the 16 petalled lotus, the three circles and the quadrangular ramparts all round constitute the Sri Chakram of the Supreme Mother." In the Yantra (i) the inner group forming the central dimensionless point (Bindu), the primary triangle (Trikona) with its apex downwards and the figure of eight corners (Astakona) symbolize bliss, Laya or absorption, (ii) the middle group forming the figure of ten angles (Antradasara), another figure of ten angles (Bahirdasara) and the figure of fourteen angles (Catur-dasara) symbolizes mastery over the worlds, preservation or Sthiti and (iii) the outer group consisting of the eight petalled lotus (Asta-dala-padma), the sixteen petalled lotus (Sodasa-dala-padma) and the square field (Bhupura) symbolize extension or Srsti.

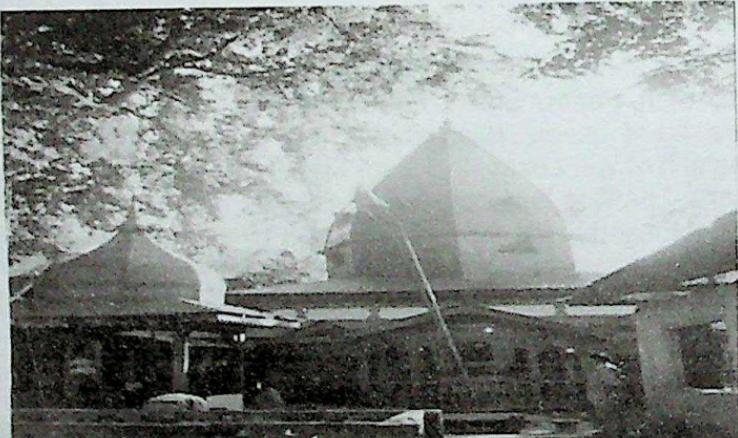
The shrine of Chakreshwari is also known as Pradyuman Peeth, Sidh Peeth, Shakti Peeth and Sharika Peeth. Bhagawti Mantra is of seven 'Bijakhsharas' symbolic of Sharika, seven Sages and seven Lokas. In Tantra Shastra, Udharkosa is a unique Grantha. The first half includes 25 Patalas (paragraphs) and has been composed in the form of Adhyayas (chapters) dealing mainly with Bhijamantras of Gods and Goddess. Similarly, the other half contains 35 Adhyayas (chapters) which also deals in detail the Bhijamantras. The Mantra is a verbal expression, and Yantra or Sri Chakram is visual expression, of Divine Mother.

On Navreh, the New Year Day of Kashmiri Hindus, which falls in the month of Magh and during the days of Navratra, devotees regularly visit the Hari Parbat for special prayers and worship of Sharika. Some selected verses of 'Sundaryalahari,' 'Pancastavi' and 'Durga Saptshati' dedicated to Divine Mother are recited by devotees at the shrine.

Kalhan's 'Rajatarangani' mentions Sharika Parbat, Hari Parbat, as the epicentre of spiritualism in Kashmir. A number of holy spots and temples are located on all sides of the Hari Parbat hill. The devotees undertake *Parikrama* of the whole of hillock. The *Parikrama* would start from the Mahaganeshas shrine (Ganishon),

which is located on the south-western spur of the hillock. Ganesha is represented by a huge rock, 'Shila' smeared with 'Sindoor'. He is worshipped both in the form of image and Yantra inside the temple. The 'Swastika' is known as graphic symbol of Lord Ganesha.

After prayers at Mahaganesha, devotees move towards the rock, known as 'Sapat Rishi', with which the earliest scientific calendar devised by Kashmiri Pandits, now 5085 years old is associated, is worshipped. Further onto the cluster of four Chinars known as 'Lal Ded's Boni' and from there, devotees move to a small temple of Mahakali. In front of the Kali temple is a large chunk of land known as *Sidh Peeth*. It is believed that great saints of Kashmir, Rish Peer, Krishna Kar, Sahib Koul, Madhav Dhar and others meditated here and attained divinity. After *Sidh- Peeth*, next is *Devi Angan* at the foot of the hill with Chakreshwari temple at the hilltop. A flight of steps, one hundred and eight in number, lead to the Chakreshwari temple. The steps are wide, and made of dressed stone slabs. Devotees then move towards Mahalakshmi *sthapna*. On its left is Amber Koul temple dedicated to Lord Krishna.



POKHРИBAL TEMPLE

A long trail of about a kilometer ahead is Pokhri-Bal. It is situated well below the hillock on the banks of Nagin Lake. *Pokhri* means spring and *Bal* as place, --- the place of springs. The holiest of springs at Pokhribal is known the Amrit Kund. This is a square shaped clear water spring, surrounded by Chinar trees. An ancient Shiva temple stands overlooking the holy *Kund*. The Amrit Kund is the place where the holy feet of Goddess Sharika are supposed to rest. The holy water of Amrit Kund is sacred and refreshing to devotees, who reach there after a long *Parikrama* of Hari Parbat. A

temple dedicated to Mother Raghnya is a part of Pokhribal complex, besides number of rest rooms, a community kitchen. Other facilities are also available for the devotees. Special *Puja* is offered on certain auspicious days at Pokhribal. On *Hura Ashtami*, on the eve of *Shivratri* devotees cluster around the *Amrit Kund* and recite *Sholakas* from the scriptures and sing *Bajans* collectively throughout the night. Next morning *Tehri*, yellow cooked rice, is distributed as *Prasada*.

Before devotees reach the exit gate, Kathidarwaza, there is a small Hanuman temple at the right side of the foothill. Hanuman is a very popular deity. This is the last holy spot on the *Parikrama* route.

On the top of the southern spur of the Hari Parbat hill, the Mughal rulers constructed a fort, which is known as Hari Parbat fort. Inside the fort there is an ancient temple, which was renovated by Dogra kings. The temple is located on the upper terrace of Hari Parbat Fort. It is believed, that the temple enshrined an idol of Sharika Devi. During Muslim rule, the devotees of the Sharika, took it to Sarthal in Doda, in the interior of Jammu, to save it from desecration, at the hands of Muslims. The deity is known as Sarthal Devi in Doda now.

JAWALA



JAWALA TEMPLE KHREW

Jawala, the Goddess of Fire, is another Isht Devi of Kashmiri Hindus. The temple of Jawala is situated on a hillock in the village of Khrew about twenty- three kilometers away to the south-east of Srinagar. The shrine of Jawala was constructed by Raja Daya Krishan Koul. It is approachable by a flight of 360 steps made of dressed stone. The octagonal shaped temple rests on an eighteen feet high base. The Sanctum Sanctorum is an eight by eight feet square shaped structure. The ceiling of wide dome was decorated with Khatamband design, which has now started decaying and crumbling at several places. Jawala remains physically manifest in the form of a 'Jyoti' at the hill top. A six foot stone, *Shila* smeared with *Sindoor* is inside the temple. This sacred *Shila* has naturally carved mystical lines forming triangles and hexagons in the shape of Sri Chakram. It is believed that the *Shila* turned black due to the occasional flames which sparked here from time to time.

Kalhana refers to the village Khrew in 'Rajtarangini' as 'Khaduvi', where according to him, there were three hundred and sixty springs of fresh water in ancient times. He mentions that on the hill-side to the east of the village, there was a standing rock on which a Svayambhu-Chakra or 'mystical diagram' was drawn. At present, three prominent springs still exist, the most important is 'Bod Nag' which is located close to the temple. It is also known as Nagbal. There is no 'Linga' inside the temple but a number of 'Shivaligas' are around all the springs. A six hundred years old idol of Laxmi Narayan is also standing near the Bod Nag. Another idol, believed to be nine hundred year old stands to the west of the Bod Nag. The idol is of the Goddess Maharajini.

The springs of Khrew have perennial source of fresh water which come straight from the mountain glaciers. The water of the springs of the shrine, also known as Nagbal, flows out into a wide stream, which is known as Kol. The water is crystal clear, about two feet deep. Its width varies from five to ten meters. After traversing a distance of about five miles, this Kol joins Vitasta at Pampore.

On the left side of the 'Jawala Parbat' is the revered hill of 'Vishnu Pad'. It is considered to be a sacred hill venerated by Hindus. At the top of the Vishnu Pad hill is a stone rock with a foot mark on it. According to tradition, the foot mark is that of Lord Vishnu. In ancient times, pilgrims used to climb the hill and worship Lord Vishnu, but such pilgrimage is no longer in practise now.

On *Ashad Shukla Chaturdashi*, fourteenth bright fortnight of June-July every year, a great festival is held at Khrew to celebrate the birthday of the Goddess Jawala.

TRIPURSUNDARI, DEVSAR

5

In Tantra Shastra the Mother Goddess is known as Tripursundari. She is the collective energy of Brahma Shakti (Saraswati in conjunction with Brahma), Vishnu Shakti (Lakshmi in conjunction with Vishnu) and Rudra Shakti (Gauri in conjunction with Shiva). She is the Goddess of three worlds of creation, preservation and dissolution in the universe.

The shrine of Goddess Tripursundari, is situated at Khana Barnayan about two kilo-meters from Devsar and eighteen kilometers from Anantnag. Apart from the main temple, which had the *murti* of Goddess Tripursundari, there was a *dharmshala*, and a *havan kund* in the complex, constructed by Swami Ram Dass. The complex was reduced to ashes by Muslim zealots during December, 1992, in the aftermath of the demolition of Babri Masjid.

TRIPURSUNDARI, BALHAMA

The Shrine of Bala Devi is located in a village Balhama, named after Goddess, is thirteen kilo-meters from Srinagar and is surrounded by village Wayun in the east, Zewan in north and township of Pampore in the west. Earlier the shrine was open from all sides, but it was fenced in 1975. This ancient shrine has a *Shiv Linga*, surrounded by five sacred devdar trees. The shrine has twenty stone idols of Gods and Goddesses. The Devdar trees are considered to be sacred by the Hindus.

The Goddess Bala Devi, also known as Tripursundri, has three eyes and has the moon crescent above her forehead. In her two hands, she has the book and the rosary of beads. Her other two hands are in Abhay and Dhyan Mudra. She is of red complexion and wears red clothes.

Bala Devi is mentioned in Mahakala-Samhita, Mantra Mahodadhi, Sri Lali Topakhyan and Haritayan Samhita or Tripura-Rahasya. According to Sri Lali Topakhyan which forms a part of Brahmand Purana, it is mentioned that Sri Bala Devi is the daughter of Sri Lalitmaha Tripurasundari. At the age of nine years

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she became terribly angry after seeing Bandasura and his thirty sons, marching for a war. Bala Devi requested her Mother Maha Bhatarika, Sri Lalita Tripura Sundari to allow her to fight Bandasura. Her Mother was reluctant to grant her permission because of her tender age. After great pursuance her mother agreed. Apart from her mother's blessings she got a shield for her protection, then she proceeded on a chariot towards the battle field. After an intense fight she was able to kill the thirty sons of Bandasura. Haritayan Samhita or Tripura- Rahasya, mentioned that Bala Devi, at the age of eight years, fought Bandasura with out the permission of her mother. She went quietly to the battle field on a chariot followed by Mantrani and Dandani. She was able to pierce the mighty forces of Bandasura with her arrows, and then she confronted Kutilash, the commander of the forces, riding on a mighty elephant and killed him. Afterwards she confronted the 'asura'. Instead of attacking Bala Devi, Bandasura showered flowery arrows on her. Seeing this, the charioteer of Devi was astonished and asked the Devi the reason for the same. The Devi said, "In the last incarnation Bandasura was 'Mahadoot' of Sri Lakshmi and his name was Manik Shekhar. He was an ardent devotee of Bhagwati Lalita Maha Tripura Sundri. Because of the curse on him, he became 'asura' and was told to earn salvation only by being killed by me. Knowing, that I am the daughter of Sri Lalita Amba, he is worshipping me." After defeating the 'asura', Devi returned to her abode, Sripuri.

According, to folklore, the original abode of Bala Devi is in South India. It is believed, that the priest of the temple had a dream in which Devi told him to visit Kashmir, where she would appear to him and give him her Darshan. The priest along with his devotees, guided by the divine blessings of the Devi came to Kashmir and journeyed to the village of Balhama. The Balhama was a dense forest at that time. The Goddess appeared to the priest in a spring in the forest, and gave *Darshan* to him. She directed him to plant trees around the spring. The priest planted fine saplings of 'devdar' trees around the spring, which in the course of time grew to full size and covered the entire spring, but unfortunately, this spring is not visible today. The five 'devdar' trees are believed to be thousands years old and are principle object of veneration at present.

During the reign of the Dogra ruler Maharaja Partap Singh, the Bala Devi shrine assumed prominence. Bala Devi is the Ishat Devi of Dogra rulers. Maharaja Partap Singh used to walk bare foot for about a kilometer to reach the shrine. Every year, *Havan* was performed in the month of *Magh* on *Tik Chorum* as well as in the

month of *Haar on Haar Chourm*. The devotees visiting the shrine offered milk, and used to worship, by reciting the hymns in the praise of the Goddess.



TRIPURSUNDARI, BALHAMA

BHIMA DEVI

Theid and Brein are two small villages, situated in the outskirts of Srinagar city, close to Dal Lake. Both the villages are of great religious importance. According to Rajatrangini, village Theid was known as Theda---a place full of vineyards and orchards. King Samdhimat, who, Kalhana writes, ruled Kashmir in first century BC, established many *Mathas*, temple establishments, in Theid and installed 'Shiva Lingas' and other idols, at number of places in the village.

Abu-l-Fazul found magnificent stone-structures and memorable remnants of the ancient glory of the village, Theid along with seven springs, linked with each other. That was which had remained of the ancient glory. Aural Stein however, found the seven springs namely 'Saptapuskarni' in Theid, the rest had disappeared.

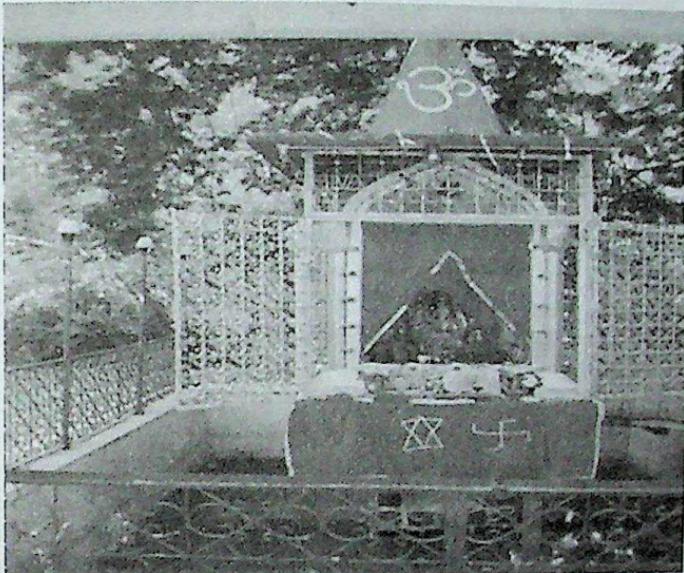
In the adjoining village of that Brein, stood ancient shrine of Bhima Devi. Kalhana mentions, in Rajatranini, the ancient temple of Bhima Devi was in the village of Brein. Sacred texts of 'Nilmat Purana' and 'Haracaritacintamani' also mention the shrine of Bhima Devi along with sacred seven springs of Theid. Ruins of the temple are striven around the village.

ZYESTHA DEVI

Zethyar, the abode of Goddess Zyestha, is situated about five kilometers from Srinagar towards its eastern side on the banks of Dal Lake. This is one of the ancient shrines which were blessed by Shiva with Ridhi, Sidhi and Budhi. Devotees offer prayers at Zyestha Devi on Thursdays especially during the month of Jyesht. Tahri, yellow cooked rice, is believed, to receive Mother's grace. Jalauka, the son of the emperor Ashoka, is believed to have built this ancient shrine in third century BC. It has a sacred spring which is also worshipped by the devotees. Jalauka is said to have built another shrine on the banks of Dal Lake, on eastern side of Srinagar. This ancient sacred shrine of Jyestharudra has a sacred spring, which is worshipped by the devotees.

Zyestha Devi's manifestation relates to an important event which took place during the churning of Great Ocean called *Ksirsagar*. *Devtas* and *Asuras* both desirous of attaining immortality were yearning for the holy *Amrit* from *Ksirsagar* but for the permission of Lord Shiva to churn it. So, all of them with great reverence prayed to Lord Shiva. Pleased with their devotion, Shiva gave them permission to churn *Ksirsagar* with a condition that whatsoever will come out of churning will be shared by *Devtas* and *Asuras* alike, which they gladly accepted without knowing the outcome. Lord Shiva simplified the whole process of churning. Mandra Parvat, ---the biggest mountain, would be used as churner and Lord Narayan would take incarnation of *Kurma Devta* ---a giant crocodile, to hold the great mountain on his back. Vasuka Naga---the great serpent, would be used as a rope for churning. Initially 14 gems came out from *Ksirsagar* including Goddess Lakshmi, but suddenly it was followed by deadly poison *Kalakuta*. This deadly poison started engulfing and burning every thing around. All of them started praying to Shiva who consumed it. But he stored it in his throat, which turned bluish. For this reason, Lord Shiva is worshiped as *Neel Kantha*. *Devtas* gave *Amrit* and *Eherawat*, elephant to Indra whereas Lord Vishnu was given Goddess Lakshmi. The *Asuras* became infuriated and snatched Goddess Lakshmi from Lord Vishnu. They kept her in captivity in a

cave called Guptagara now called Gupkar. This action of Asuras gave rise to wrath of Lord Shiva and with his divine force he created Goddess Zyestha and Vir Vaitala with powers to annihilate all the Asuras and free Goddess Lakshmi from their clutches. Upon accomplishing the task, Lord Shiva bestowed both of them, Zyestha and Vaitala with the powers of protection and upliftment of mankind. This event is believed to have happened on the *Panchami*, of *Krishen Paksh*, dark moon night, of the month of *Jyeshtha* which is celebrated as the birthday of Zyestha Devi every year.



ZYESTHA DEVI TEMPLE

UMA DEVI

6

The ancient shrine of Uma Devi is at Uma Nagri situated in the lap of the mountain at Uttarso village, thirteen miles away from the township of Anantnag, in south Kashmir. Goddess Uma Devi is worshipped in many forms. She is considered to be the Universal Mother, the supreme power, which upholds the whole universe and fulfills the aspirations of her devotees. Her vision, in golden effulgent rays, was got by Devraj Indra, as mentioned in Keno Upanishad. In Mahabharata, she is described as Radha of Sri Krishna and Laxmi of Vishnu. For Shaivas, she is the consort of Lord Shiva. In the Puranas, she is mentioned as Mahakali or Chandi. Yogis meditate on Her as *Kundalini Shakti*, the cosmic power, or supreme power, which helps in self-realisation, the ultimate truth, for attaining ultimate bliss.

It is believed that the Goddess manifested herself in the form of a stream and appeared in the shape of OM in five springs at Uma Nagri. The springs are named, Brahma Kund, Vishnu Kund, Rudura Kund, Shiva Kund and Shakti Kund. Out of these springs, two merge into a single spring, thereby signifying the communion of Shiva and Shakti, in the supreme oneness of Sat- Chit- Anand.

A legend associated with the Uma Nagri is that of Rakhshasni Brari. A devotee of Uma Devi persuaded the Goddess, to descend to a place of solitude for her meditation to secure her beloved Shiva. Granting her request Goddess Uma, took her abode at a place in the village Utrasu, which came to be known as Brari- Angan, also known as Uma Nagri.

Swami Svayamananda Ashram's publication Sri Uma has given a detailed version of the shrine. A factual and interesting event, which took place during the Afghan rule, in Kashmir is worth describing. The Afghan governor Haji Karam Dad Khan summoned a great saint Pandit Shiv Ram to attend his court at Srinagar during 1781 AD. The saint did not attend the court. Then the governor ordered his armed soldiers to bring the saint, to his court. When the soldiers reached the spot where the saint was sitting in *Samadhi*, they were surprised to find two lions sitting by his side, one on his left and the other on his right. On seeing the lions the horses of the soldiers were frightened and galloped off. The soldiers fell down from their horses on the stones below, receiving injuries. They did not dare to go back to the saint, instead returned and reported their experience to the governor. Haji Karam Dad Khan was surprised and decided to go and see things for himself. He went personally along with his bodyguards to see the saint. He ordered his men to leave the horses at a distance and went on foot to the spot where the saint sat. There he saw the two lions sitting besides the saint, who was in *Samadhi*. When the Governor approached the saint plaintively, the two lions were instantly transformed into two harmless cats. The Afghan Governor was amazed at the saint's spiritual powers and offered him 1600 kanals of revenue-free agriculture land and a strip of forest facing the shrine for its maintenance. This was given effect to on 1st. of Baisakh 1838 corresponding to 13th April, 1781, the date on which the governor visited the shrine.

Swami Svayamananda, a great Kashmiri saint who was meditating at the Shankaracharya temple, Srinagar, was blessed with a vision of Goddess Uma Devi on Basant Panchmi, and was

directed to visit permanent abode of the Goddess at Uma Nagri, Uttarsu. Swami ji started further construction on a big scale on 12 June 1973. New Shrines were constructed and the old one was repaired in Uma Nagri complex. The Shiv-Shakti Kund, circular in shape with 128 feet in circumference and 40 feet diameter, was repaired. The main temple of Goddess Uma Devi, 33 feet high and 12 feet in diameter, in the center of the spring and marble covering of the outer surface of the temple was constructed. On *Ganga Ashtami*, Goddess Uma's *Murti* was installed and *Mahayagnya* was performed. Annual *Havan* used to be performed on *Uma Jayanti* on a very large scale and thousands devotees used to participate, for achieving blessing of the Goddess Uma Devi.

BRARI MAEJ, MURRAN

Murran, a beautiful village in north Kashmir, is about two kilometers from Pulwama town. The natural scenery of this village is charming, surrounded by green pastures, meadows, paddy fields, shrubs and trees. The temple of Brari Maej is situated in the north-west of the village Aparipur. The word Brari has developed from Bhatarika, the venerated Mother. Bhatarika in Sanskrit means revered or venerated. Brari Maej is synonymous to Divine Mother Uma.

It is said that, a pious Pandit Bhawani Bhat, 1770-1840, of village Sumbal, had a celestial dream on *Magh Ashtami*. A divine effulgence filled his muddy room as the Divine Mother looked affectionately at Bhawani Bhat and said, "Your great devotion has made me happy. The time has come to shift you from this place, as you are facing a lot of hardships during rainy season here. Early next morning, there will appear a cat in your compound. Pack up your belongings and follow her and settle down where she will give you an indication. That will be your next place of settlement. But remember, your seven generations will live at this new place of settlement with dignity and honour and your eighth generations will no longer stay here." The Divine Mother disappeared there after. Early next morning, the divine cat appeared in the compound of Pandit Bhawani Bhat. By that time he had already packed up his little belongings and followed the cat till both of them reached a village. The divine cat gave an indication to Pandit Bhat by waving the tip of her tail and disappeared. When she was gone, a small spring emerged on the spot. The place was afterwards expanded by laying a single stone and a temple was built on it. The temple was called Brari Maej and an image of the Divine Mother is installed on it.

The beautiful temple is surrounded by chinar trees all around. There is a spring with a diameter of about fifteen meters and having crystal clear water close to it. The temple is facing towards the east of the upper bank of the spring.



SHIVALAYA

Adjacent to the Brari Maej temple is a Shivalaya dedicated to Lord Shiva. Behind the main temple, there is a marshy land locally known as Sar. There are two Dharmshalas on the right side of the main entrance. There are many walnut and almond trees in the temple complex.

LOK BHAWAN

Lok Bhawan Tirath Raj is situated at a distance of eleven kilometers south of Anantnag town. It is off the Anantnag-Verinag main road at Larikpora, nine kilometers from Anantnag. From Larikpora a link road goes to Tirath Raj Lok Bhawan. This village of Lok Bhawan is situated at the foot of a kerewa. It is said that Lok Bhawan was a big town in ancient days. The village was named after local king Shri Lok Nath. M.A. Stein in his translation of Rajatarangini writes, that Kuthar Pargana was annexed to district Breng. On the west of Pargana, five miles from Achabal towards south-west was Lok Bhawan, a well developed village. In Rajatarangini, the village is given the name as Lok Puiya. The name was given as the village had a fine spring. Lalitaditya, the great Hindu ruler laid the foundations of the Lok Bhawan town. It

was spread over to the present Sadoora village in the north and Shankarpura village in south. There are some ruins of old buildings near the spring. It is said, Lalitaditya used to worship Lord Ram here, in a small tunnel about six feet in breadth.

Adjacent to the spring, known as Amrit Kund, is located the temple of Goddess Sidha Laxmi. A temple dedicated to the worship of Shiva is also located in the Lok Bhawan. Another temple located in the complex is dedicated to the worship of Radha Krishen. On the right corner of the main spring there are Waman Ganga spring and Saraswati kunda. On the top of the high ground of the Karewa is the shrine of Mahakal Bhairava. Towards the northern periphery of Lok Bhawan is a spring called Narain Nag. This is the first spring among the twelve springs ensuing the main spring, the Amrit Kund.

According to the local tradition, Lok Bhawan karewa was barren and devoid of any source of water, till the seventh century AD. A dumb orphan girl, Dai Mal as a routine, would carry the water in a pitcher from a distant source on her shoulders and deliver it to the inhabitants of the village. Once, while returning with water, she saw a lion coming towards her. Instead of running away, she gestured that she was willing to come back after having delivered water to the needy and left. After delivering the water, she returned to the spot where she had seen the lion. But to her utter surprise, she did not find the lion. She started searching, but of no avail. She wept, thinking that she had not fulfilled her promise. Lord Vishnu appeared to her where she had seen the lion and blessed the Kaj Maj. She requested Lord Vishnu to bestow the area with water. The Lord in the form of a celestial bird struck the spot with its beak, water started gushing out. Kaj Maj, the dumb girl humbly bowed before the celestial bird. She also turned to a celestial bird and flew in the skies with the Lord. All this blessings took place on the *Ashad Shukla Paksh Dwadashi* or *Har Bah*. This day is observed with great devotion especially by woman folk ever since.

A Hindu mystic saint of Kashmir, Pandit Poshker Nath Koul, popularly known as 'Posh Mot,' deeply religious, learned and spiritual guide, spent many years at Lok Bhawan. He initiated many repairs in the temple complex of the Lok Bhawan, giving it a face lift. He started *bhajans* and *kirtans* at the holy place.

FOOT NOTES

1 SARADA

Kalhan's Rajtarangini records in the chapter 'The Shrine of Sarada' as "The temple of Sarada rises in prominent and commanding position above the right bank of the Madhumati on the terrace like foot of a spur, which descends from a high pine clad mountains to the east. Immediately below this terrace to the north-west, is the spot where the waters of the Madhumati and the Kishen Ganga mingle. There, on a sandy beach, the pilgrims perform 'Shradas' to their ancestors. From the height of the staircase, which forms the approach of the temple from the west, an extensive view opens. To the south-east, the valley of the Mudhumati is seen narrowing gradually into a gorge between precipitous spurs through which passes the direct route to Kashmir via Kroras. In the north-east from where the Kishen Ganga flows, successive ranges of barren steep mountains with snowy peaks behind them seem to close all passages. To the north, a narrow chasm in the rocks marks the debaucher of the Sangam river, the Kankatotri of the map, which flows from the mountains towards Cilos and falls into the Kishen Ganga a short distance above the Madhumati." It is the Saraswati of Kalhan's description, still known by that name to local traditions.

The saint Shandalya with Goddess Sarada's blessings became great Rishi and Gotra Pravartak. He composed many hymns and wrote stotras on Sarada Devi. His seat and Sri Chakra are worshiped in the shrine. Sri Chakra form of Mother Goddess, in her form of *Shakti* is associated with Chakrashwari (Hari Parbat). Sri Chakra is worshiped at Hari Parbat also in the cosmic form of Divine Mother. As per our religious scriptures this form is cosmic yoga of the goddess, tantric in nature, which is adopted while fighting evil. Sri Chakra is an intricate expression of nature and life. Close to temple there had been a great centre of learning as Sarada used to be the abode of scholars and Pundits of high Vedic learning.

Goddess Sarada must have manifested in the valley around 2500BC and it is around this time that Her shrine was established, where various sages including Gautama, Shandalya were privileged to have Her Darshan. It is believed, King Mutskund (1040-1060AD) being the builder of Sarada temple. Rajatarangini identifies Mutskund, a Gauda warrior from Bengal, during reign of King Ananta (1028-1063AD) who built Kapteshwar Temple with same architecture as of Sarada Temple. This king cursed with a pair of buffalo's ears, anxious to get rid himself of this deformity, learnt about powers of Kapteshwar spring. The king took a dip in the spring and got rid of his cursed ears. In gratitude, Mutskund built the temple. Kapteshwar is also mentioned in Nilmat Purana, when sage Bhadravasa narrates its Mahatmaya to king Gonanda I (Pre-Mahabharata), associating it with the form of Shiva as a wooden log.

Another reference is of legendary king Makan of Kupwara (Mallapura) who is said to have been defeated and who got killed in one of his battles by his enemy. His minister is stated to have carried his dead body to Sarada. The miraculous healing powers of the spring, not only brought him

back to life, but also restored his vigour, courage and determination to fight back the enemy. Sarada is identified as the Goddess of warriors too. She is Goddess of war, learning and wisdom. Some of these attributes are mentioned in the Rudoayamala Tantra. She is the embodiment of ten Vidyas (*dasavidya*), She is also slayer of *daityas*.

Dr. Max Muller, the great German Sanskrit scholar writes, "It was the only Sarada learning center in India where there was arrangement for teaching Indian philosophy, which we call six systems of Indian philosophy. A prestigious education center based on Gurukul system flourished here. When and who built this grand and majestic temple at Sarada remains a mystery." Similarly, the authorship of 'Sarada Mahatmaya' remains unknown, but it is believed, Madhavacharya, a staunch devotee of Adi Shankara, being the author.

It is said, Shandalya was disciple of Adishthata (head priest) of Vijay Keshava, the presiding deity of the Vijeshwara temple (Bijbehra), who gave him the Panchakshri Sarada Mantra and advised him to go to the jungles of Kamraj (North Kashmir), to observe penance and to exercise austerity while meditating on Sarada. After great 'tapasya' Goddess Sarada revealed Herself in all Her divine grandeur to Shandalya. Meanwhile, the Guru of Shandalya had a vision and in a dream he was asked to proceed to Shardi with other Brahmins for performing Yugnopavil sanskar of Shandalya. This was the first pilgrimage to Sarada Devi.

SARADA STOTRAM

1. O, Goddess Saraswati in the shrine of Sarada Pitha in Kashmir, I offer my salutation to you.
2. I pray always to you to give me the gift of knowledge. You are the faith, the power of retention, of what is learned, and the power of memory. You are the consort of Lord Brahma. You dwell at the tip of the tongue of the devotees. You are the one who grants qualities like mastery over the mind, to your devotees.
3. I salute you, who has mastery of everything, who is Parvati and who is Jnana-Ganga that extinguishes the fire of the afflictions of Samsara.
4. My salutation to Goddess Durga always. My repeated salutations to Goddess Saraswati, who is the abode of knowledge such as Vedas, Vadangas and Upanisads.
5. My repeated salutations to Saraswati whose nature is Brahman, who is supreme, whose form is light of knowledge, who is the presiding deity of all knowledge and who is eternal.
6. My repeated salutations to Goddess Saraswati, who is the presiding deity of knowledge and without whom the entire world of living beings would become like dead for ever.
7. My repeated salutations to Saraswati who is presiding deity of speech, without whom the entire world would be like mute and mad for ever.

(English translation of Sarada Stotram is rendered by C.V.Gopinath)

2 MAHARAJNI, TULMUL

The pilgrimage to Kheer Bhavani has a great significance. While going to Kheer Bhavani first the pilgrims reach 'Vicharnag'—the spring of contemplation, then to 'Tyangal-Bal'—the hill of ambers, after which the pilgrims reached 'Kavaj-Var'—the cremator's groove and 'Amar-Haer'—the immortal ladder. The third place is Aanchar Lake, which derives its origin from Aachar—righteousness. Finally, the pilgrims reached their destination—Divine Mother.

Swami Vivekananda visited Tulmul during his stay in Kashmir. Soon after he had a vision of Mother Kali at a solitary place near Srinagar, Swami Ji went to Kheer Bhawani on 30th September 1898. There he lived a life of intense austere and devotion to the Mother for a week. His biography narrates the details of his stay at the shrine; 'Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa, and worshipped Her with offering Kheer made of one mound of milk, rice and almonds. Every morning he used to worship a Brahmin pandit's little daughter as Uma Kumari, the Divine Virgin.' When he returned to Srinagar, he appeared before his disciples a transfigured presence, writes Nivedita. 'No more Hari Om It is all Mother, Mother now' he said. One day at Kheer Bhawani he had been pondering over the ruination and desecration of the temple by the Muslim invaders. Mother spoke to him 'what, even if unbelievers should enter My temples and defile My images! What is that to you? Do you protect me? Or do I protect you?' At the same shrine, in course of worship one day, he wished in his heart that he were able to build a new temple in place of the one which is in dilapidated condition. He was startled in his ruminations by the voice of the Mother Herself, saying to him, 'My child! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centers. I can even at this moment raise a seven storeyed golden temple on this very spot.' After that Swami Ji said; "Since hearing that Divine Voice, I cherish no more plans. The idea of building Maaths etc., I have given up; as Mother wills, so it will be'. On this, one of his disciples asked, "Sir, you used to say that Divine Voices are the echo of our inward thoughts and feelings." Swami Ji gravely said, 'Whether it be internal or external, if you actually hear with your ears such a disembodied voice, as I have done, can you deny it and call it false? Divine Voices are actually heard, just as you and I are talking."

3 SHARIKA

The devotees who concentrate on the Sri Chakram, seek awaken their spiritual consciousness, Kundalini Shakti. The 'Kundalini 'Yoga is the main theme of the 'Pancastavi'. Its five Hymns are descriptive prayers to 'Tripurasundari', which is very common with Kashmiri Pandits.

The Gita speaks, of Para Prakrti, which is none other than Para-Shakti. The collective energy of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh is known as Tripura or Sri Tripursundhari. In Tantra, Shiva and Shakti are not two different

entities. It is Shiva as Shakti. The appearance of both is like the two sides of the same coin. The dynamic aspect of the highest Reality is Para-Shakti and its static aspect is Parma-Shiva.

According to the Upanisad, Shiva's Para-Shakti is manifold, as described in the Veda, the natural energies of knowledge, power and action. Jnana, Bala and Kriya correspond to Jnana Shakti, Iccha Shakti and Kriya Shakti respectively. Tantras corroborate the Vedic classification of Shaktis. Along with the power of Shiva to conceal----Pidhana and power of favour---Anugraha, the Shakti constitute its five-fold expression of Para-Shakti. Para Shakti is the primeval source, the Supereme Mother, with five glourious natural energies.

Ksemaraja explains in Bhatta Narayana, "We bow to Shiva who, enjoining His five-fold glory reveals the spiritual Shakti, the power of consciousness and bliss." Para- Shakti is the original source, the Supreme Mother, with five glorious natural energies.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, has described Kundalani Shakti in his Gospel as;" The centre at the heart corresponds to the fourth plane of the Vedas. There is in this centre a lotus called 'Anahata' with 12petals. The centre known as 'Vishudha' is the fifth plane. This centre is at throat and has a lotus with 16 petals. When the 'Kundalini' reaches this plane, the devotee longs to talk and hear only about God. A conversation on worldly subjects, on 'Kamini' and 'Kanchan', causes him great pain. He leaves a place where people talk of these matters. Then comes the sixth plane corresponding to the centre known as 'Ajna'. The centre is located between the eyebrows and it has a lotus with two petals. When the 'Kundalini' reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God. It is like a light inside a lantern. You may think you have touched the light but in reality you cannot because the barrier of the glass. At last of all is the seventh plane, which according to the 'Tantra', is the centre of the 1000 petalled lotus. When the 'Kundalini' arrives there, the aspirant goes into 'Samadhi'. In that lotus dwells 'Sat Chitanand Shiva' the absolute. The 'Kundalini', the awakened power, unites with 'Shiva'. This is known as Union of 'Shiva' and Shakti".

Adi Sankaracharya describes in a Shloka of his Saundarya Lahari, 'Whereas most Gods bestow the boon of fearlessness on their devotees by raising their right hand in Abhaya Mudra, Mother Goddess Durga bestows benedictions from Her Holy Feet. Those who bow their heads at the feet of Goddess Durga attain their cherished goal.'

4 MAHARAJNI- MANZGAAM

Manzgam is in the Naarav pargana of Kashmir. Naar is the hill of Manzgam and Vaav the hill of Nadmarag, a place near the famous water fall of Aharbal on the Vaishav. 'Naar 'means fire and 'Vaav' means wind. Many Rishis have attained divinity at this place. Some of the known saints of recent past who practiced Sadhana at Manzgam shrine, were

Swami Anand ji Maharaj (1893-1978), Swami Vidyadhar (1942-2006), Swami Radhakrishan, Baba Ramgiri, Nagbal Devigiri, Guru Bai Swaroop Giri ji, Swami Ved Lal Dharmarthi, Swami Vanna Baba and others. Brahmchari Moti Lal would often visit this shrine. At his behest, the shape of holy Kund was changed from square to octagonal.

5 HYMN TO TRIPURASUNDARI

1. I seek refuge in Tripurasundari, the wife of the Three-eyed One, who wanders in the Kadamba forest, who is like a cluster of charming or bliss-giving clouds in the (sky of the) heart of sages, beautiful of form, served by celestial maids, whose three eyes are like the fresh blossomed lotuses and whose complexion is dark blue like the colour of freshly formed rain clouds.

2. I take refuge in Tripurasundari, the wife of the Three-eyed One, dwells in the Kadamba forest, who holds golden flute and wears a necklace of priceless gems, whose face is flushed with wine, who of Her Grace grants prosperity, the Large-eyed One who protects devotees.

3. Ever are we protected without the least effort by Her who has Her abode in the Kadamba forest, whose breasts are garlanded with flowers, beautiful of form, who is extremely compassionate to all, whose cheeks are flushed with wine, ever singing sweet songs and drak complexioned, (like a rain cloud).

4 I seek refuge in Tripurasundari, the wife of the Three-eyed One, who lives in the Kadamba forest, who is seated on the golden disc and dwells in the six lotuses (Chakras) of the Yogis, ever flashing like lightning (in the heart of) the perfected ones, whose beauty excels that of Japa (Hibiscus) flower and whose forehead is adorned by thye full moon.

5. I take refuge in Her, the sweet speaker, daughter of the sage Matanga, who has the Vina (a musical instrument) reclining on Her breast, beautiful with curly locks and who dwells in the lotus, the the destroyer of the wicked, whose eyes are reddened with wine, the charmer even of Shiva, the destroyer of Cupid.

6. I take refuge in Tripurasundari, the wife of the Three-eyed One, who is to be meditated upon as being in the first flush of Her youth with the wine cup in Her hands and Her eyes rolling with wine, beautiful of form with disheveled hair and dark of colour.

7. At the time of muttering prayers (Japa) I meditate on the Mother Tripura beautiful as the red Japa flower, Her body pasted with saffron etc., Her hair dressed with musk, Her eyes beaming with smile, who wields the arrow, bow, noose and goad, the charmer of all men, decked in Her red garlands, ornaments and apparel.

8.I worship the Mother of the universe, who is served by celestial damsels, the spouse of Indra, maid skilful in dressing the hair, the devoted wife of Brahma, expert in anointing with sandal paste, the wife of Vishnu adorning Herself with beautiful gems.

(Adi Shankaracharya's Ashat Stotram in praise of Tripurasundari, is reproduced from Altar Flowers)

6 UMA DEVI

Devi Mahatmaya, as described in the 5th chapter of Durga Saptasati and Gauri Dashakam, composed by Adi Shankaracharya, ten hymns in praise of Mother Goddess, 'Lila Labdhas' is very popular amongst Kashmiri Pandits is recited by devotees at the shrine. Many Kashmiri poet-saints have translated 'Gauri Dashakam' in Kashmiri for the benefit of the devotees.

*Lila-labdhas thapita-lupta kilalokam,
Lokatitai yogibhir-antarhridimrig yam,
Baladitya Shreni samana dyutipunjam,
Gourim Ambam amburuhakshim ahamide.....*

" I adore the lotus-eyed Gouri, Who, by way of sport, creates, preserves and destroys the universe, Who is always sought after by selfless Yogis and Who is a mass of splendour equal to many morning Suns."

GAURI DASHAKAM

1. I adore the lotus-eyed Gauri, Who, by way of sport, creates, preserves and destroys the universe, Who is always sought after by selfless Yogis and Who is a mass of splendour equal to many morning Suns.

2. I worship the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, who gives the highest bliss to those devotees, who are given to mental restraint, meditation and *Samadhi*, who is subtle in form and embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.

3. I praise the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, whose handsome smiling face gladdens the heart of Shiva; whose (Divine Mother's) mass of dark blue hair is adorned with Chandrapida (an ornament in the shape of a half-moon or crescent) and whose lotus feet are worshipped by Indra, Upendra and other gods.

4. I adore the lotus-eyed Divine Mother, Gauri, who is embodiment of the whole of the Sanskrit alphabet from 'aa' to 'ksha', who always creates multitudes of beings, who is of essence of *Shabda- Brahman* and bliss and who has the radiance of lightning.

5. I worship the lotus-eyed Divine Mother, Gauri, who is the embodiment of Supreme Bliss, who is subtler than the subtlest, who pervades the *Sushumna* from *Muladhara* to *Sahasrara* and the *Pingla* and *Ida*, sports luminously.

6. I adore the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, the consort of Shiva; who revels in the sport of protecting this universe and for whose acts of creation and destruction, the Supreme Lord Shiva, one and indivisible, Pure and Eternal, is witness.

7. I worship the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, who sports with her Lord Shiva on the silvery mountain (Himalaya), and whose womb the entire *Brahmanda* cosmic egg or seed remains to rise up again and again.

8. She in whom and through whom everything, movable, exists as a necklace of pearls, strung on a thread, and who can be attained through the path of knowledge, I worship Her, the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Mother.

9. I adore the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, who is sporting spontaneously, pervades all the worlds in different manifestations, who is ever auspicious and who is veritable *Kalpalata*, wish fulfilling creeper to the devotees, who take refuge in Her.

10. I worship the lotus-eyed Gauri, the Divine Mother, who destroys the selfish desires and miseries of the devotees, who intently meditate upon Her lotus feet, who is Sovereign of the Universe, and who, sharing the half of the body of Shiva, is delightful to behold.

(English rendering of Gauri Dashakam is by J.L.Pandita.)

In 1782 AD, Pandit Shiv Ram Koul assumed the name of Swami Shivananda. He adopted a boy of five from the Kilam village. The boy was given the name of Ramananda. He started meditation at the tender age of five only at the feet of his spiritual father. Swami Shivananda left his mortal body in the bright half of Posha, 1790 AD. Before he did so, he sat in Samadhi on a baked clay pot of a suitable size, putting another Kalasha like pot on his head. He sat on the eastern side of the shrine called Mokhshdam. His skeleton was dug out at insistence of a Yogi from South India, Parmahamsa Rama Krishnananda in the year 1954 AD. It is said, Parmahamsa had a vision and was directed to go to Kashmir and build a Samadhi of Swami Shivananda. At the time of digging, the skeleton was found intact in Buddha like posture seated on a clay pot and with Kalasha like pot covering the head upto neck. Eleven Rudraksha beads of big size were also recovered around the skeleton. A Samadhi was constructed and the remains were duly transferred to it, while a Vedic Yagya was performed. Since then annual Yagya is performed on this day with great devotion.

Swami Ramananda was a saint of high order. Widely celebrated saints of Kashmir, like Merza Kak of Hangalgund, a great mystic poet who

has performed many miracles and Jiwan Sahib of Lodhava, another great saint, were impressed with his advanced spirituality and would often visit him at the shrine. Swami ji, adopted two disciples Rajananda and Shudhananda. Vasananda, the illustrious disciple of Rajananda, became a Raj Rishi and got some buildings erected with help of Raja Sher Singh, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir. He adopted Keshwananda as his son and got him married. His descendants are still living near the shrine. Shudhananda also adopted a son. He named him Shivananda, who meditated for three years at the nearby Ramnag. Then he performed Purushacharana----Japa Yagya.

Shudhananda invited Sanskrit scholars to teach Vedanta to his disciple-son Swami Shivanand II. He was joined in Vedanta studies by Shankar Pandit and Gwash Kak who later became renowned saints and Sanskrit scholars. Swami Shivanand II got the springs repaired in the year 1910 AD and practically gave the present shape to the shrine. During this time, Shri Prayag Chaitanya, better known as the Saint of Trehgam (Baba) stayed at the shrine, for a long time. He is said to have acquired perfection by the grace of Maa Uma. The Baba, a miraculous saint, is believed to have given up his mortal body at the age of 300 years, at Trehagam.

Swami Bhaskaranand, President, World Federation of Saints, who visited this sacred shrine on 14th October 1954, declared this shrine as 'Sidha Peetha'. He further said, 'success in spiritual practices is easy of attainment at this place by any devotee, whatever caste, creed or colour he may have.'

Immediately after the demolition of 'Babri' structure many Kashmiri Temples were destroyed and desecrated. Daily Excelsior (Jammu), reports, 'on 8th December, 1992 the militants attacked and set on fire the Uma Nagri complex. In the complex, an old 'Dharamshalla' depicting the Kashmiri art and craft was not even spared and everything was destroyed within the temple. Besides, the Dhooni Sahab, sacred fire, which was burning since 1872 day and night, was extinguished. In addition to it, the famous temple constructed of marble stones inside a pool of water, named Shiv Shakti Kund was not spared.

CHAPTER VI

DESTRUCTION OF TEMPLES

The establishment of the supremacy of Islam in India is a part of the history of India. The commitment of the Muslims to fight idolatory found expression in the destruction of the Hindu temples, the centres of idol worship in India. "The Hindu temples are the abode of God. They are not prayer houses. "In the Hindu temples *Param Parmeshwar* is worshipped in the iconic forms, he assumed with the evolution of the Sanskrit civilization of India, as the manifestation of the unity of the universal existence and the embodiment of the creation. The rise of the Muslim power in India, set in motion, sociological conflict. The Muslim struggle to efface the religious culture of the Hindu India formed a part of that conflict. The Mughal conqueror Babar, informed of the destruction of Ayodhya, exclaimed in ecstasy, "For Islam's sake, I wandered in the wilds, prepared for war with Pathans and Hindus, resolved myself to meet the martyr's death. Thanks be to God, a Ghazi I became."

That the Muslim rulers, right from the time of the Muslim invasion of India, to the time they succeeded in establishing their way over the country, accomplished the task of destroying the Hindu temples and shrines with ferocity and zeal, is borne by the facts of history. "There is enough evidence recorded by the contemporary Muslim chronicals and British historians about the destruction of the Hindu temples and shrines by the Muslim invaders as well as emperors who established their dynasties to rule India. Muslim historians wrote of the demolition of the Hindu temples during Gaznavi's invasion of India. "In Banaras which is the centre of the country of Hind, they destroyed the thousand temples and raised mosques on their foundations. Surat-I-Feroz recorded; "Feroz Tughlaq attacked Orissa in 1360 AD and destroyed the temple of Jaganath".

The iconoclast zeal of the Muslim rulers did not end there. The destruction of the Hindu temples was not aimed to consolidate Muslim power in India. It was the expression of a spontaneous craving to serve the faith of Islam. "In 1731, Nasirudin Mohamad Tughlak Sultan sent Muzaffar Shah Khan to destroy the famous temple of Somnath. He demolished the temple and built a mosque over the foundations of the demolished temple. The temple had been rebuilt by the Hindus, after it was pillaged by Gaznavi's

hordes. Muzaffar Khan succeeded Nasirurdin Mohammad, after the latter's demise in 1393. Aurangzeb's grand-daughter and the daughter of Bahadur Shah, Alamqir noted in *Safiha-i-chahal Nasaih Bahadur Shahi*, written and compiled in late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. "The places of worship of Hindus situated at Mathura, Banaras and Avdh etc. in which the Hindus have great faith, the birth place of Kanahaiya, the place of Rasoi Sita, the place of Hanuman, who according to the Hindus, was seated by Ram Chandra over there, after the conquest of Lanka, were all demolished for the strength of Islam, and at these places mosques have been constructed."

Mohamad Khilji demolished many Hindu temples and built mosques over their ruins. In 1472 AD, Mohamad Begara attacked Dwarka and destroyed the temple of Sri Krishna. During the reign of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah and the tenure of the governorship of Saadat Ali Khan, a serious riot took place between the Hindus and the Muslims in 1735 AD, the former claiming their right over Ram Janam Bhumi. This is the earliest judicial reference available in this regard. In *Hadiqa-i-Shahada* (1856) Mirza Jan wrote: "The past Sultans encouraged the propagation and glorification of Islam and crushed the forces of the unbelievers, the Hindus. Similarly, Faizabad and Avadh were also purged of the unworthy practice of Kufr. Avadh was a great worshipping centre of the capital of Kingdom of Ram's father." Illyas Shah demolished and destroyed Hindu temples all over South India.

There was no difference in the religious policy of the Muslim rulers in India and the religious policy of the Muslim rulers in Kashmir, who established their hold over the ancient Hindu kingdom in the early fourteenth century AD. The Muslim rulers of Kashmir disapproved of all forms of idol worship, the same way the Muslim rulers in India did. The Hindu temples and shrines, being the centres of idol worship among the Hindus, evidently attracted the wrath of the Muslim rulers, who proclaimed themselves, the defenders of their faith. In many respects the severity of persecution of the Hindus in Kashmir, was greater than in the rest of India and the temples and Hindu shrines were exposed to wider destruction, than they were in the rest of the country. "Laltaditya, 761 A.D., founded the Karkota Empire of Kashmir. He extended his power into the upper Punjab in the south and west of India and western Tibet in the north. He built many magnificent temples in Kashmir, the most imposing of them being the temple of Martand. After him, king Avantivarman built two temples, Avanti-Swamin dedicated to Vishnu, and Avanti-

Swara dedicated to Shiva. His son Sankara Varman built two elegant temples at Pattan, both dedicated to Shiva. During the reign of the Muslim Sultan Sikandar, known as the iconoclast, most of the Hindu temples were destroyed. The temple of Martand was reduced to ruins. The task of destroying the remaining temples was accomplished by Sikander's successors. The destruction of the Hindu temples in Kashmir continued unchecked during the Chak rule, which followed the Shahmiri Sultanate, the rule of the Mughals, who wrested Kashmir from the Chaks and the Durrain Pathans, who followed the Mughals."

Corroborating the above account, Walter R Lawrence, a British Revenue official of the Government of India, who wrote extensively on the Kashmir, writes, "after destroying most of their temples, Sikandar turned his attention to the people who worshipped there and he offered them three choices: death, conversion or exile. Tradition affirms that only eleven families of the Hindus were left alive in Kashmir."

The demolition and destruction of the Hindu temples was a part of the Muslim policy to break the resistance of the Hindus to the consolidation of their power in India. The demolition of the temples by the Muslims was aimed to extend the Muslim power in India and to facilitate the spread of Islam over its length and breadth. The construction of mosques over the remains of the demolished temples was aimed to prove to the Hindus that they were beyond redemption and thus pave the way for the destruction of Hinduism. A mosque was built by Sultan Qutub-din-Aibak in 1193 AD and named Quwatul-Islam Masjid. The mosque was renovated and enlarged by Shamsuddin Iltimush in 1211-36 AD and Alauddin Khilji in 1216-1316. Quwwatul-Islam Masjid symbolised the might of Islam. Pillars and the stone slabs, of as many as twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples, demolished by the Muslim rulers, were used in the construction of the mosque. The mosque is still intact, standing in the enclosure of the Qutub Minar in Delhi.

After having consolidated their hold on power in the Hindu kingdom of Kashmir, the Muslim rulers lost no time to initiate a widespread campaign of conversion of Hindus to Islam. They mounted a vigorous assault on Hindu temples, places of worship and centres of Hindu religious learning, where Hindu scriptures were taught and teaching in Hindu religious precept and practice was imparted. Among the prominent centres of learning, in the Hindu system of philosophy and Yoga, were several institutions,

comparable to the modern universities. Sharda Peeth and the Sharika Peeth were the institutions, which attracted scholars from Central Asia and China. Scholars and aspirants of learning came from all over India to study the Hindu philosophical systems and acquire the knowledge of Kashmir Shaivism and Yoga, besides acquiring proficiency in the Hindu ritual practices. The educational institutions provided facilities for the boarding of scholars who came from outside Kashmir and housed huge and rich libraries with thousands of Sanskrit texts and books, many of them ancient manuscripts and priceless texts, many of which were inscribed on birch bark and paper, indigenously manufactured. Many of the manuscripts and texts were in Sharda and Pali.

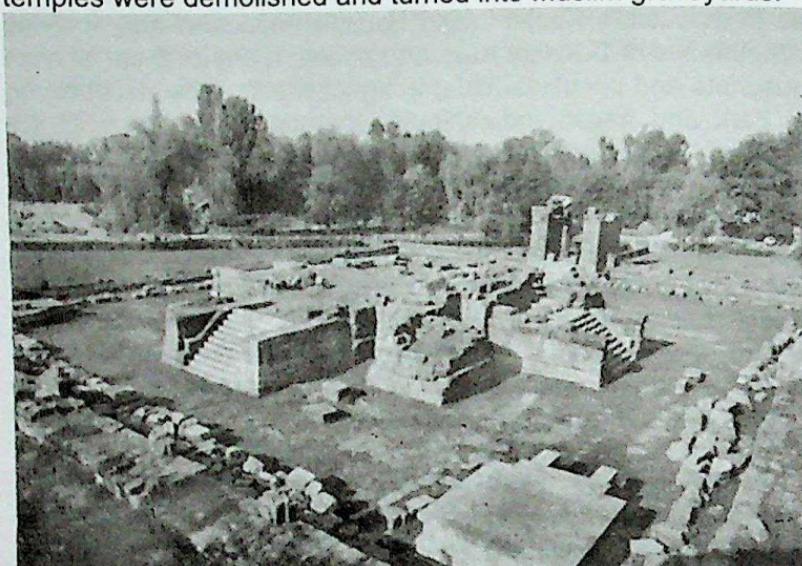
Besides the institutions of learning there were a large number of institutions, where teaching was imparted in Tantric Hinduism of the Agma school. These institutions were run by Shaiva Acharyas, most of whom taught the tenents of the Agma Shaivism and Kundalani Yoga. Many of the institutions had rich libraries of books, manuscripts and the commentaries of the Shaiva Acharyas and the commentaries of great masters of Shiavism like Adi Shankaracharya and Abinavgupta.

The Muslim invaders mounted a three-pronged attack on the Hindus in Kashmir, to efface all forms of their worship, their rituals and religious practice. First, they launched a widespread campaign of forcible conversions of Hindus to Islam. Secondly, they mounted an assault to demolish the Hindu temples and places of worship. Thirdly, they destroyed the Hindu institutions of learning, burnt down their libraries and dumped piles of books and manuscripts in the Dal Lake. Jonaraja, who left an account of the turbulent period, which followed the founding of the Shah Miri Sultanate, lamented that the Muslims fell on the Hindus as the hosts of locusts descend on cornfields.

The organized campaign of the suppression of idol worship and the destruction of temples was initiated by Sultan Sikandar, who ascended the throne in 1389 AD. Sikandar, who earned the name of "But-Shiken"---the Iconoclast, initiated a widespread drive to demolish and destroy the Hindu temples. After having demolished the temples, Sultan Sikander ordered Muslim shrines to be built over their ruins, using the stone slabs of the demolished temples, in the construction of the mosques.

During the reign of Sikander, the highly venerated shrine of Kali Shuri, in the heart of Srinagar, situated close to the Zaina

Kadal Bridge, on the 'eastern bank of the river Jhelum, was demolished. A Muslim shrine, the Khanquah Maula was built over the plinth of the temple. The locality around the Khanqah is now known as Kalashpur---a corruption of Kali Shuri Pore. On the western bank of the river, opposite the Kali Shuri temple, were two temples, Zeshthesa Bhairov and Vishaksera Bhairov. Both the temples were demolished and turned into Muslim graveyards.



AVANTIPORA RUINS

Besides Martand, Sultan Sikander got the temples of Tripreshar and Surevsvati Vihara temples destroyed in South Kashmir. The ancient temple of Vijayesvara, in Bijbehara, dedicated to Shiva, was also demolished on the orders of Sikander. King Ashoka, after he annexed Kashmir to his empire, built the temple of Ashokesvara close to Bijbehara. It was also demolished by the orders of Sikander. While the temple was being demolished, the *Shiva Linga* of the Vijayesvara temple, which had escaped destruction, was ordered to be broken up and destroyed. The ruins of Ashokesvara temple lay strewn all over the place till recently. Reportedly, the ruins were dug up and the stone slabs used in the construction of the Bade Masjid there. Ironically, the construction of the Bade Masjid commenced in the fortieth year of the Indian freedom.

Sikander ordered the temples in South Kashmir to be demolished and himself went upto the Lidder valley with the intention of supervising the demolition of the temples there. He proposed to go to defile the cave temple of Amarnath as well. On

reaching Ganeshbal, he ordered the image of Lord Ganesha, standing in the middle of Lambodhari--- Lidder River, to be broken. Legend has it that when the knee of the idol of Ganesha was struck, blood spouted out. Sikander was frightened and he turned back.



DEFACED IDOL AT FATEHGARH

Sikander ordered the demolition of the ancient shrine of Chakradhara, situated near Bijbehara. Built on the high ground of the Karewa called Tisukdhar Vudar, the temple was dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple was demolished and the idol of Chakradhara broken.

In Srinagar, the temple of Vikramishvera, situated close to Vicharnag was destroyed during the reign of Sikander. The temple was built by king Vikramaditya. The stone slabs of the temple were used to build a mosque nearby. The temple of Tribhawana Swamin, which was also located in Srinagar, was also demolished during the reign of Sikander. The temple was constructed by the Hindu king Chandrapida. The surrounding garden of the temple was converted into a graveyard.

The temple of Tarapida, built by the Hindu king Tarapida and was situated close to the present Nawahatta crossing in Srinagar. The temple was also demolished during the reign of Sikander. On its ruins was built the Jamia Masjid in 1407AD. After the destruction of the Tarapida temple and the construction of the Jamia Masjid over its ruins, the Sadbhava Sri temple situated to west of Masjid was converted into a Ziarat, which was later named Ziarat Pir Haji Mohamad. The Sadbhava temple was built by the Hindu king Praversena-II. After some time, Sultan Qutub-ud-Din was buried inside the Ziarat, turning it into a tomb. Before his death, Sikander converted the magnificent temple of Maharishi Mandir, situated near the eastern embankment of Zaina Kadal Bridge over the river Jhelum, into a tomb for his queen.



KAKAPORA TEMPLE

Sultan Sikander carried his depredations to northern Kashmir as well, where Hindu temples and shrines were demolished and destroyed with greater zeal. The Narendra Shiva temple was built by Narendraprabha, the queen of Pratapditya-II. It was destroyed during the reign of Sikander. Sikander's son, Zain-ul-Abdin, also known as Badshah, used the stone slabs and the rubble of the demolished temple in the construction of the bund from Naidkhai to Sopore. A magnificent

temple stood in the centre of a small island in the middle of the Wullar lake. Zain-ul-Abdin ordered the demolition of the temple. The island was called Sona Lanka and the king converted it into an amusement garden called Zaina Dab.

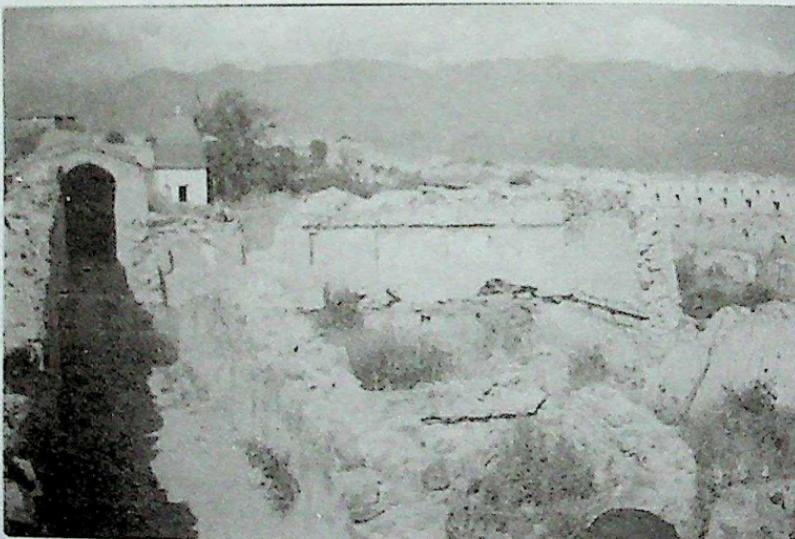


PATAN TEMPLE

The demolition of the Hindu temples continued even after Sultan Sikander died. His son and successor, Zain-ul-Abdin continued the demolition of the Hindu temples, till he fell ill and was saved from death by the treatment he received from a Hindu physician, Shree Bhat, who cured the king of his deadly malady. Zain-ul-Abdin, greatful to Shree Bhat, told him that he would grant him whatever favour he asked for. The physician in deep humility, beseeched the king to put an end to the persecution, the Hindus were subjected to. Zain-ul-Abdin granted Shree Bhat his wish. Zain-ul-Abdin, however, continued to rule in accordance with the precept and precedent of Islam, but the process of prosecution, the Hindus had been subjected to during the rule of his predecessors, was brought to an end. Till he died, the Hindus lived in peace. The Hindus called him Badshah, the great ruler, the name by which he is still remembered in Kashmir. Zain-ul-Abdin was tolerant to a limited extent. He did not allow the reconversion of the Masjids and Muslim shrines into Hindu temples, which had been converted from temples. He allowed the Hindus to rebuild some of the temples. The reprieve Shree Bhat had earned for his Hindu brothers ended with the death of Zain-ul-Abdin. The Muslim Sultans who succeeded him spared no efforts to bring about the conversion of the Hindus to Islam and to destroy their temples and

religious shrines with the same iconoclast zeal, with which the temples and shrines, had been destroyed by his predecessors.

A temple was built by the Hindu king Likhana- Naraindritya who ruled Kashmir in 178 to 191 AD at Narparisthan in Srinagar. The temple named Narparisthan was turned into a Ziarat, which is now called Narpirastan. The Ziarat of Pir Dastgir stands on the spot where the massive and imposing temple Ekadasharudra, dedicated to the worship of Shiva, stood once. In Srinagar, on the eastern bank of the Vitasta close to where the Nawakadal bridge crosses the river was another massive temple with several water springs, named Sikanda Bhawan. The temple was converted into a Ziarat called the Ziarat of Pir Mohamad Basur. The place is now known as Khanda Bhawan. A short distance away from Khanda Bhawan, another temple stood on the banks of Vitasta. The temple was built by Queen Didda and was called Deda Math. The temple was converted into the tomb of Malik Sahib. Now the place is known as Deda Mar.

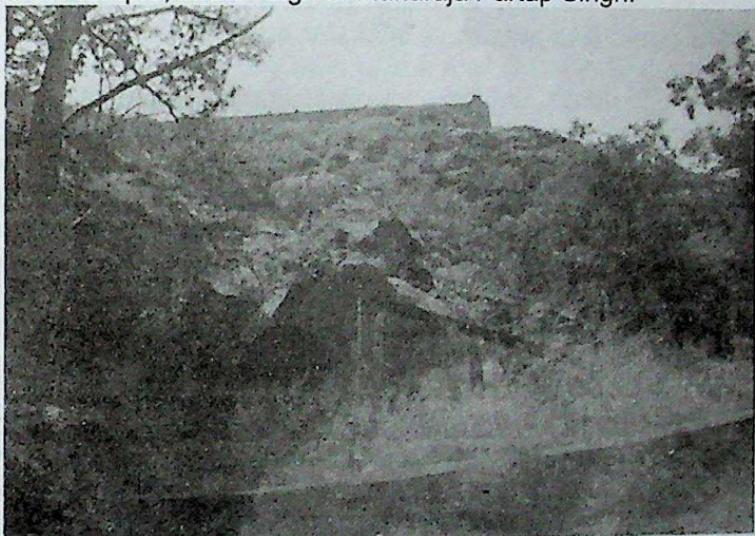


SHARIKA TEMPLE INSIDE HARI PARBAT FORT

On the north-eastern side of Dal Lake, the Hindu king Paraversena II, built a shrine for his mentor, the sage Sukarna Swami. The shrine was demolished. On the eastern bank of Dal Lake, close to where the Mughals laid out the Shalimar garden, the Hindu king Ramaditya built a temple known as Rameshvara temple. The temple was demolished. Bernier visited Kashmir in the company of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. He saw the Mughal

Gandhi Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu garden of Shalimar. He made an interesting observation and wrote," the doors and pillars made of stones used in the garden during the Mughal era, had come from some of old temples demolished by Shah Jahan and that it was impossible to estimate their value."

The description of the demolition and the destruction of the Hindu temples and shrines would not be complete without referring to the temples, which were not built of solid stone. In Kashmir, there was a tradition of constructing temples of wooden beams, laid into horizontal layers of one over the other, forming a square chamber. The Sanctum Sanctorum was placed in the middle of the chamber around which space was left to perform *Parikrama*. The plinth of the temples was built in stone over which the wooden structure rested. The temple roof was pyramidal and formed of wooden beams. The temple of Kheer Bhawani was built of wooden beams constructed on the stone basement in the middle of the holy spring. The wooden temple was replaced by the present marble temple, in the reign of Maharaja Partap Singh.



DAMAGED KALI TEMPLE NEAR SHARIKA TEMPLE

Many of the temples were constructed in concrete, brick and wooden beams. They were converted into sacred shrines dedicated to Muslim saints and Sayeeds or turned into tombs in which prominent Muslim preachers and missionaries were buried. Several of the structures were converted into holy Muslim shrines in which sacred relics were kept. Many of such old temple structures stand intact, even today, their interior closed permanently.

BUDDHIST SHRINES

Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhist learning. Great masters of Buddhist learning traveled from Kashmir to Tibet, Mongolia and Central Asia, where they propagated the Sarvastavadhin school of Buddhism. Sarvastavadhin Buddhism flourished in Tibet and from there spread to Western China.

Besides the institutions of Buddhist learning, there were Buddhist place of worship and Buddhist monasteries, the Agraharas, where the Buddhist Arhats lived. A vast sprawling complex of Agraharas was located at Malang Pora across the river Jhelum at Avantipur. Towards the close of the last century, construction work at Malang Pora brought to surface, earthenware pots, called '*Machawari*' in Kashmiri, in which Arhats bones were preserved. Buddhism received the patronage of the Hindu rulers, who, though devote followers of the Hindu faith, venerated the Buddhist learning. In many Buddhist shrines, images of Buddha in standing posture, or in *Mudra*, stood in majestic form.

The Buddhist shrines, including Stupas, Buddhist Viharas and centers of Buddhist learning were demolished with the same zeal, the Hindu temples and places of worship were destroyed, during the reign of the Shah Miri Sultans. The books and manuscripts on Buddhist theology and ritual practice were burnt and destroyed. The Buddhist shrines were built in stone and masonry. Many of their shrines were constructed in stone, brick and mortar and wooden beams. Some of the Buddhist shrines which escaped demolition, still stand a testimony to the antiquity of the Buddhist shrines in Kashmir. The Buddhist Stupa located on the western bank of the river Jhelum, on the Sumbal-Srinagar highway, a few miles from the ancient Hindu township of Shadipur, and the Buddhist shrine situated to the east of Vicharnag in Srinagar, are among them.

In Vicharnag, Vonta Bhawan is a locality situated close to the Vicharnag temple. Near by two huge clay mounds existed till recently. On the mounds grew white iris flower shrubs, in abundance. The mound in Vonta Bhawan was called "Chakhdar" by the local people. Hidden underneath the mounds were the ruins of two Buddhist shrines. Vicharnag was a great centre of Buddhist learning in ancient Kashmir. In the early eighties of the last century, the two mounds were claimed by the Muslims and consequently dug up. They turned out to be huge heaps of rubble-

stone. According to the reports collected from the local Hindus of Vicharnag, a number of stone images, terracotta figures, tiles, trays of backed clay with inscriptions in Sharda and Sanskrit and dressed stone blocks were found deep in the rubble. A few of the stone figures were retained by the Hindus and kept in the premises of the temple at Vicharnag. The rest was lost.

The whole of the north-eastern part of the Srinagar city, on the eastern fringe of which, is located Vicharnag, is strewn with the ruins of the Hindu temples and Buddhist shrines. At many places near the Bota Kadal bridge over the Mar cannal, which drains out the water of Dal Lake into the Anchar Lake, close to Vicharnag, huge stone slabs, belonging to old Hindu temples are strewn around. All along the narrow roads winding through the old township of Srinagar, from Razver Kadal to Zadibal, ruins of many old Hindu temples and Buddhist shrines spread out unattended. At many places, Muslim shrines known as *Asthans* stand upon old temple plinths.

Harwan is a small village about two miles from Shalimar garden in Srinagar. It was a of learning of Buddhism in Kashmir, full of monasteries, Chaityas and Stupas. The great Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, the founder of the nihilistic philosophy, Shunyavada, lived here. During the Dogra rule, excavation brought to surface, a large number of broken figures and images of Buddha, and a few clay tablets on which Stupas were found in relief miniature. The Stupa depicted on the tablets had a triple base, all the three flights of steps leading up being in line with one another, as is the case with the existing Stupas.

The demolition of Hindu temples in Kashmir continued after its conquest by the Mughals. The Governors deputed by the Mughal rulers to administer Kashmir, were religious zealots who fleeced the local population to raise as much revenue as they could for the imperial court and spared no efforts to spread their faith. During the reign of the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, the Hindus sent their emissaries stealthily to the Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur to deliver them from the persecution the Mughals perpetrated over them. The Afghans, who wrested Kashmir from the Mughals, continued the persecution of Hindus with greater vigour. The Afghans were more intolerant, forbade Hindu religious practices and destroyed whatever was left of the Hindu temples in Kashmir. The persecution of the Hindus and destruction of their places of worship came to an abrupt end when the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, conquered Kashmir in 1819. In 1846

Kashmir was integrated into the Jammu and Kashmir State, carved by the British from the territories of Sikh state. Badly battered and reduced to a small minority in Kashmir, the Hindus did not reclaim the temples and shrines, which they had lost during the Muslim rule. The Dogra rulers, who took over the Jammu and Kashmir State from the Sikhs, established a Department of Archeology to look after many ancient temples, most of which lay in ruins. Many of the temples were put in the care of the Dharmarth Trust, headed by the Dogra rulers. Many of the temples were taken over by the trusts which the Hindus themselves constituted. Many other temples which lay in ruins, striven all over the length and breadth of Kashmir, were entered in revenue records and left to the care of the local Hindu population.

A preliminary survey was undertaken in Kashmir to identify the Hindu temples, over which Muslim shrines were built and temples which were converted into Muslim shrines, during the Muslim rule. The survey also sought to identify the Muslim shrines and Ziarats, which were built of the stone work of the demolished Hindu temples. A report was prepared on the findings of the survey, which was published later. The survey conducted did not cover all the temples in Kashmir and accepted that a more comprehensive survey needed to be conducted to provide information about all the Hindu temples over which the Muslim shrines were built or the shrines which were converted into Muslim shrines.

The report of the survey listed a number of Muslim shrines and tombs which were built upon the sites where the demolished Hindu temples stood. The report also listed the Muslim shrines and tombs which were built upon the ruins of the Hindu temples, Buddhist Aghararas, and Stupas, and Muslim shrines which were built of the stone work of the demolished Hindu temples.

Following Muslim shrines were reported to be built on the Hindu temple sites;

1. Shrine of Abban Shah in Ghagarpur built on temple site;
2. *Astan* of Syed Swaliya Shah in Narbal built on temple site;
3. Mosque at Bijhebara built on temple site;
4. Bumzu *Astan* built on temple site;
5. Kechihom, two Mosques built on temple sites;
6. Lohar *Astan* of Chanan Gazi built on temple site;
7. Marsus *Astan* of Shah Abu Allah built on temple site;

8. Grave-yard at Zaina Kadal built on temple site;
9. Khanqah-i-Maula and shrine of Shahe-Hamdan at Kalashpora, Srinagar, built on the site of Mahakali temple;
10. Pathar Masjid built on the site of Buddhist Agrahara;
11. Grave-yard near Pathar Masjid built on temple site;
12. Shrine of Malik Sahib at Dida Mar built on the temple site of Did Math in Srinagar;
13. Mosque and Madarasa besides a grave-yard near Vicharnag built on the site of Vikramswara temple, in Vicharnag;
14. Shrine of Madin Sahib built on temple site, at Zadibal, Srinagar;
15. *Astan* situated west of Madin Sahib shrine at Zadibal, Srinagar, built on temple site;
16. Jamia Masjid at Nauhatta in Srinagar, built on temple site;
17. *Astan* at Narpirasthan at Fateh Kadal in Srinagar, built on temple site of Narendra Swamin temple;
18. Tomb of Zain-ul-Abdin built on temple site at Zaina Kadal;
19. Tomb of the Queen of Sikander-But-Shikan at Zaina Kadal also built on temple site;
20. *Astan* of Pir Mohamad Basur at Khanda Bhawan, Nawakadal, Srinagar built on the site of Skanda Bhavan Vihara;
21. Grave-yard at Khanda Bhavan built on temple site at Khanda Bhavan, Nawakadal, Srinagar;
22. Shrine of Hazaratbal, Srinagar, built on temple site;
23. *Astan* of Shakur-u-Din on the western bank of the Wular Lake built on temple site;

A number of Hindu temples were straight-away converted into Dargahs and Muslim shrines.

The report listed them as follows;

- (i) Ziarat of Rukunudin Rishi;
- (ii) Ziarat of Bahudin Sahil, Jaya Swamin temple converted;
- (iii) Ziarat of Nur-Parastan, Narendra Swamin temple converted;
- (iv) Tomb of Sultan Zaina-ul-Abudin, temple converted;
- (v) Ziarat of Haji Mohamad Sahib, at Nowhatta, Srinagar, Vishnu Narana Swamin temple converted;

- (vi) Astan of Pir Makhdoom Sahib and Mallah Akhoon on Hari Parbat, Bhima Swamin temple converted;
- (vii) Dargah Nakhshband Sahib, Khanyar, temple complex converted;

The report listed a number of Muslim shrines, which were built out of stone-work of the demolished temples. These temples were;

- (i) Umberher, near Dodar Hama, Ziarat of Furukhazad Sahib;
- (ii) Shrine of Baba Imam Din Rishi;
- (iii) Jamia Masjid Hutmir;
- (iv) Ziarat at Khomoh;
- (v) Lokbhan Garden Pavallion, stone-work of Lokabhavan Tirth used;
- (vi) Ziarat of Pir Mohamad Hamdani, stone-work of Vishnu Swamin temple used;
- (vii) Mosque at Pandrenthan, stone-work of Meru Vardhana Swamin temple used;
- (viii) Astan of Khawaja Khazir at Sar;
- (ix) Stone Pavallion at Shalimar Garden;
- (x) Pathar Masjid built by Noor Jehan, stone-work of temple complex and stone stair-way at the foot of Shankracharya hill used in construction;
- (xi) Mosque and Madrasa built of the stone-work of Vikaranswara temple at Vicharnag;
- (xii) Masjid of Akhoon Mullah Shah, built by Dara Shikoh;
- (xiii) Ramparts of Kathi-Darwaza, Sangeen Darwaza of the Kalai, the wall built by Mughal emperor Akbar around Hari Parbat fort built of the stone-work of demolished temples.
- (xiv) Mustan Astan at Dampor, Thied;
- (xv) Vernag, stone embankment of Vernag spring built by Mughal emperor Jehangir of the stone-work of temple complex at Vernag.

The invasion of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan in 1947, exposed the Hindu temples and shrines in the parts of the Kashmir province, over run by the invading armies, suffered heavy damage and defilement at the hands of the invaders. The Indian army pushed back the invading hordes beyond Uri within a fortnight, denying them more time to demolish all other temples and shrines. In the parts of the Kashmir province as well as the Jammu province, which were left under the occupation of Pakistan with the enforcement of the ceasefire in January 1948, the Hindu temples

and shrines and the Sikh Gurdwaras were razed to ground. Even in Baltistan which remained under the occupation of the invading armies, the Hindu temples were demolished and defiled. In Baramulla and other townships and villages, in the west and north-west of Kashmir, over run by the invaders, the Hindu temples were reclaimed by the Hindus after the invading armies were driven out.

Immediately after the accession of the State to India, an Emergency Administration was constituted to help the State Government, to meet the emergency created by the invasion. In March 1948, the Emergency Administration was dissolved and an Interim Government, constituted of the leaders of the National Conference and headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was instituted to run the administration of the state. Contrary to the hopes the Hindus harboured, that the freedom which had come to India would emancipate them from the centuries old oppression and religious persecution, they had suffered, the Interim Government, adopted policies which created fresh difficulties for them. The Interim Government introduced land reforms with the promise to transfer, "land to tiller of the soil." The lands of the religious places and shrines of all communities were not brought within the scope of the land reforms. However, a surreptitious land grab movement was put into motion by which lands attached to the Hindu temples and shrines were seized and misappropriated, with the approval of the National Conference functionaries and the revenue officials. Lands sprawling around old temple ruins, old temple structures and land owned by temple trusts and religious endowments were also misappropriated. At a number of places damage was caused to temples in remote villages and temple ruins which were not protected by the State authorities, were quietly dug up to remove their last traces. In later years a surreptitious process of changing the revenue records were put into motion to regularize the misappropriation of the temple lands. This was done to scuttle any claim the Hindus made to the misappropriated temple lands.

After the founding of the "All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front" and commencement of the Muslim movement for self-determination, the inter-community relations between the Hindus and the Muslims soured further. Hindus pushed themselves into the frontline of the resistance against Muslim separatist struggle. The Hindus resisted both the Muslimisation of the State as well as the separatist movement, seeking the secession of the State from India. They were dubbed as the 'unpaid agents of India in

Kashmir,' by those who fought for unification of the state with Pakistan, as well as those who supported the Muslimisation of the State. The distrust, which such accusations generated, often found expression in overt and covert acts to denigrate Hindu religious practise and desecration of Hindu temples and shrines.

After the India- Pakistan war of 1965, the Muslim separatist movement was radicalized and the Muslim society of the State increased its emphasis on the Muslimisation of the State. Thousands of armed commandos from Pakistan, infiltrated into the province of Kashmir. The fundamentalisation of the Muslim society accelerated the process of the obliteration of the Hindu cultural heritage of Kashmir. A surreptitious process of obliterating the ruins of the ancient Hindu temples which lay in ruins, almost everywhere in the Kashmir province, assumed greater pace. Many temple ruins were under the protection of the Archeology Department of the State government. But many more archaeological sights of great antiquity and importance were not protected. At many places the ruins disappeared overnight, particularly in the Srinagar city. The ruins of Hindu temples were scattered largely in old city and its outskirts, extending upto the Dal Lake in the east and Anchar lake in the south. One after the other, the archeological sights were obliterated. A cluster of temple ruins sprawled along the National Highway, from Khanyar in Srinagar, right upto Behama at Ganderbal, where it turns eastwards on way to Sona Marg. The temple ruins were erased. A stone temple dedicated to Vishnu, standing by the side of Jamia Masjid outside its southern gate, disappeared over night. Stone plinths of the two temples in Avanti-Bhawan, near Vicharnag were dug up quietly. A stone image of Buddha standing near a spring in the middle of which was a stone temple dedicated to Bhavani, in the hamlet of Barsoo, on the Ganderbal-Mansbal road, was toppled over and thrown into spring. At many places, old sites of earthen mounds under which lay the rubble and ruins of Buddhist shrines and Stupas were quietly dug up to obliterate whatever was hidden under them.

Anti-Hindu riots in north Kashmir began in the township of Anantnag in 1986. The riots engulfed the whole of the south Kashmir and spread to the district of Baramulla in north-west of Kashmir. Mobs attacked the Hindus, burnt their homes and then destroyed their temples and places of worship. The reports of the anti-Hindu riots evoked sharp reaction from Hindus in the Indian capital, New Delhi. Arya Samaj and the Bhartiya Janata Party sent their fact finding teams to Anantnag and the other affected places in the Kashmir province. The Bhartiya Janata Party team was

headed by Shri Kedar Nath Sahani, a senior leader, of the party. The Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi, the frontline organization of the Kashmiri Hindus living in Delhi, also sent a team of its members to Kashmir to report on the anti-Hindu riots and the damage done to the Hindus shrines and temples.

The Kashmiri Samiti team constituted of a Committee which was headed by Shri J.L.Bhat, President of the Samiti and four other members. The Committee went from village to village, collecting information about the damage done to the Hindus in the riots. The five member fact-finding Committee of the Kashmiri Samiti arrived in Srinagar on March 15. The Committee visited the worst affected villages of Dhanav, Wanpoh, Lok Bhawan, Bijbehara, Pampore, besides Srinagar. They also met the representatives of all effected areas individually and separately.

The Committee reported, "Members of the fact-finding committee observed during their visit that almost all Hindu temples in the Anantnag district have been severly damaged and desecrated, priceless architectural treasures and idols broken as a real reminiscent of the dark days of Sikander, the Iconoclast. So far as the places visited by the committee are concerned, a large number of houses have been damaged by stone throwing, 33 buildings (including 11 temples and three Dharamshala) were burnt, 45 residential houses and 20 business establishments looted and 20 temples desecrated."

The Committee gave a detailed account of the attempts to grab a part of the Lok Bhawan temple with connivance of the local administrative officials. In its report, the committee noted, "Tension has been building up at Lok Bhawan, an ancient place of pilgrimage, for the last one year. While chain-fencing of the shrine was in progress, some Muslims of the area under instigation of the Jamait-I-Islami, demanded that they be allowed to build a mosque inside the area where the structure of an ancient temple stands. In a blatantly partisan role, the local administration coerced two persons from the village into a 'compromise', stating that the ancient temple is a place of prayers for local Muslims, and can be used as a picnic spot by them. The local Muslims, who had given a threat of 'social boycott' of the Pandits, attacked and demolished all the three temples in the area with vengeance during Feberuary, 1986 violence."

The following table shows the damage done to the temples and Hindu religious shrines;

DISTRICT		ANANTNAG	
PLACE	BURNT	DAMAGED	NUMBER
Anantnag town	---	3	3
Achabal	---	1	1
Teelvani	2	---	2
Gautam Nag	1	---	1
Akura Mattan	---	1 (idol broken)	1
Dialgam	---	1	1
Salar, Pahalgam	1	---	1
Aish Muqam	1	---	1
Bijbehara	---	2 (idols broken)	2
Wanpoh , Kulgam	2	---	2
Dhanav	2	---	2
Chogam	2	---	2
Verinag	1	1	2
Lok Bhawan	3	idols broken	3
		Archological ruins dug up	1
Fateh pur	1	Ling broken	1

	DISTRICT	PULWAMA
Pulwama	---	1
Trisal	---	1
	DISTRICT	SRINAGAR
Ganpatyar	1	1
Jaw ahar Nagar	1	1
Maisuma	1	1
Chanpur	1	1
Tulmul	1	---
Waskur	---	1
Ganderbal	2	4

DISTRICT	BADGAM	
Yach KOT / yachgam	1	1
Badgam	1	1
Chadura	1	1

	DISTRICT	KUPWARA	
Tekpora	1	---	1
Lalpura	1	---	1

Handwara	---	1	1
	DISTRICT	BARAMULA	
Baramula Town	---	1	1
Vanpura	---	1	1
Sopore	---	1	1
Bandipur	1	---	1
TOTAL	24	TOTAL	23
	GRAND TOTAL	47	

MUSLIM MILITANCY

The militarisation of the Muslim secessionist movement in Jammu and Kashmir pushed the Hindus into direct confrontation with the Muslim separatist forces. The militant flanks in Kashmir commenced their offence by mounting an attack on the Hindu temples in Kashmir. In the fall of 1989, the temple dedicated to Shiva, located on the northern bank of the Chunth-Kul, canal close to Barbar-Shah bridge was burnt down. The *Shiva Lingam* and the *Pranali* underneath it, stood intact, their colour having turned ashen. The *Lingam* was covered in a piece of yellow cloth in the morning after the temple was burnt. After a short time, the outer complex of the famous temple of Somyar, ancient Som Vihar, situated close to the embankment of the Habakadal Bridge, in the heart of Srinagar was set on fire and burnt down. Within a few days, a Vaishnav temple situated on the banks of Jhelum River, close to Zainakadal Bridge was attacked. A Sadhu who lived in the temple Dharamshala was killed and the Sanctum Sanctorium of the temple desecrated. As the winter set in, reports were received that nearly eighteen temples were desecrated. No action against the desecration and damage done to the temples was taken by the State Government. The Central Government, though it received information about the attack mounted on the Hindu temples by the terrorist regimes in Kashmir, took no measures to protect the temples.

As a major militant assault on the Hindus was delivered in January 1990, the Hindu temples and shrines, religious places and Hindu religious institutions, came under heavy attack of the militants. Almost all over the Kashmir province, temples were desecrated, subjected to bomb attacks and at many places, set on fire. In suburban villages and remote regions of the province,

Hindus having fled away, there was no one left to report the damage done to the temples or complain about it. The State Government exhibited no interest in the protection and safety of the Hindu temples. The administrative organization, predominantly Muslim, and infested with pro-Pakistan and separatist agents, made no efforts to collect any information about the demolition and damage done to the Hindu temples. At many places in Srinagar as well as the other townships of the Kashmir, Hindus who went to lodge complaints about the desecration or demolition of temples, misappropriation of their land, arson and incendiary attacks on their homes, were turned back from the police-stations and District and Tehsil offices, without being able to get their complaints registered. The Governor of the State, Jagmohan, instructed the Border Security Force and other central security forces, deployed to fight the terrorist violence, to provide protection to the Hindu temples and shrines, which were left abandoned because of the exodus of the Hindu population. The religious places, which were not under the protection of the Indian security forces, were either burnt down or closed. The buildings in which the Hindu social organizations were located were also burnt down or subjected to bomb attacks. The Hindu educational institutions were either burnt down or taken over by those who were supported by the militants. The ancient shrine of Bhavani at Tulmulla was subjected to rocket attacks, which however, struck the surrounding structure, causing the shrine little damage. The shrine was saved because a garrison of Border Security Force was posted inside its premises.

A concerted campaign was mounted to obliterate the ruins of ancient temples, strewn almost everywhere in Kashmir. The ancient monuments as well as the ruins of ancient temples placed under the protection of the State Department of Archaeology as well as the Archaeological Survey of India as 'protected monuments', were not be saved from wanton damage and destruction. "Almost everywhere in the Valley, the archaeological remains of the ancient Hindu temples which stood an eloquent testimony to the Hindu heritage of Kashmir were subjected to severe attack. The ancient ruins of the temples, which were destroyed during the Muslim rule, were sacred to Hindus, who visited the sites as a part of their religious tradition. At many places the ruins were dug up to wipe off their last traces."

The issue of the demolition and damage to the Hindu temples was raised in the Indian Parliament. On 12 March 1993, the Minister of State of Home in the Government of India stated in the

Parliament that thirty eight Hindu temples had been demolished and damaged in Kashmir during the period from 1989, to 1991. He stated that during the year 1989, thirteen temples were demolished and damaged, during the year 1990, nine temples were demolished and damaged and during the 1991, sixteen temples were demolished and damaged.

YEAR	TEMPLES DAMAGED AND DEMOLISHED
1989	13
1990	9
1991	16
TOTAL	38

The White Paper on Kashmir, issued by the Joint Human Rights Committee, provided information about the damage and demolition of the temples in remote villages. The White Paper stated, "The actual number of temples demolished and damaged in Kashmir was much larger and vandalism to which the Hindu shrines were exposed, was widespread. Sixty-eight temples and shrines located in remote villages, far more ancient and sacred, were burnt and demolished or damaged, about which reports were not collected by the State Government."

The demolition of the Babri structure in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992, led to widespread anti-Hindu riots in Kashmir and demolition and desecration of a large number of their temples. Frenzied mobs of Muslims attacked Hindu temples, burnt them down and demolished them all over the Valley. The Hindus having already left the Valley, there was little resistance to the depredations the temples were subjected to. The White Paper on Kashmir noted, "In the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, traditional Muslim intolerance towards the Hindus, erupted into widespread attack on the Hindu temples and places of worship. Thirty nine temples were demolished, burnt, damaged and desecrated by frenzied mobs, who cried death to India and death to the Hindus."

The following table shows the temples demolished and damaged on 7 December 1992, 8 December 1992 and 9 December 1992.

Temples demolished and destroyed after the demolition of Babri structure;

7 DECEMBER 1992

PLACE	BURNT/ DAMAGED	NUMBER
ANANTNAG	DO	1
SRINAGAR	DO	1

7-8 DECEMBER 1992

KULGAM	DO	1
KUND, SOPORE	DO	1
KRICHHAMA, TANGMARG	DO	1
KUZAR, TANGMARG ROAD	DO	1
KUVI, UTRASU	DO	1
CHITERGUND, ANANTNAG	DO	1
BANA MOHALLA, SRINAGAR	DO	1
KARFALI MOHALLA, SRINAGAR	DO	1
SHUMSHAN BOOMI, SRINAGAR	DO	1
NARSINGH BAGH, SHADI PUR	DO	1
NANDKISHORE, SUMBAL	DO	1
PHALGAM	DO	1
VERINAG	DO	1

9 DECEMBER 1992

TRAHGOM	DO	1
PATTAN	DO	1

The wanton damage and destruction of the Hindu temples, in the days following the demolition of the Babri structure, continued sporadically for many more days. The protest against the assault and demolition of the Hindu temples which the Hindu displaced persons organized in Jammu and Delhi, evoked little or no response from the State and the Central Governments.

The Muslim Jehad followed a political objective in the demolition and destruction of the Hindu temples and the places of Hindu worship. The White Paper on Kashmir noted; "The destruction of the Hindu temples, and ancient monuments and the obliteration of their ruins was a part of the Jehad, the terrorist flanks carried on in the State". The White Paper further noted, "The destruction of the temples and religious institutions was evidently aimed to destroy the Hindu religious tradition and culture and to pave the way for total Islamisation of Kashmir. The militant

organizations followed a systematic policy to uproot the Hindus from Kashmir, economically and socially and break their resolve to return home."

While the terrorist violence in the State escalated, the Hindu temples and places of worship were exposed to more depredations. The State Government, now conducted by the Governor and a number of Advisors, who assisted him in the conduct of the State Administration, evinced scant interest in the protection of the Hindu temples and shrines. Such temples as were guarded by the Indian security forces and the temples in which the security forces had established their quarters and pickets, escaped the wrath of the Jehad, as it escalated into a full-fledged religious war against the Hindus. The Muslim fundamentalist forces with the active connivance of the Muslim clergy and the Muslim officials of the State Administration and supported by the terrorist flanks waging the Jehad, stepped up their attack on the Hindu temples and places of worship which had no one to look after them.

After the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir, a systematic plan was put into operation to obliterate the last traces of the Hindu shrines and places of worship;

- (a) At a number of places, the temple lands, enclosures and temple yards, were nibbled away by miscreants with the connivance of the officials of the local administration as well as terrorist regimes.
- (b) The plinths of temples were burnt down or demolished, and were quietly dug to wipe out the last traces of their existence.
- (c) The idols in many temples were clandestinely removed and either broken up or sold to antique smugglers. A large number of idols and images, removed from the Hindu temples, were recovered, while they were being smuggled out of the Valley.
- (d) The violence and widespread disturbances, the onset of the terrorist operations, unleashed, exposed the ruins of the ancient Hindu temples, striven around almost in every township of the Kashmir province, to wanton destruction. At many places the ancient monuments were dug up, the stone structures dismantled and broken up and carried away to wipe off their last traces.

APPENDIX I

MAHATMAYA SHRI SHRI MAHA RAJNI PRADUR BHAVAH THE TEXT OF THE SRI MAHA RAJNI STUTIH HYMN

1. Of whom one form is adorned with twelve rays, firm upon a seat on a lion throne, and surrounded by snakes, goddess going on without wheels, possessing Divine Power. I pay homage to her, the highest Rajni, of glorious form.
2. Elevated, shining like thousand suns, having three eyes, seated on the lion throne, surrounded by snakes, holding a cup, carrying sword and lotus, with an elixir container in her hands, I worship Rajni her face blossoming like lotus.
3. Under the base of the lotus; a multitude of dark excellent jewels are placed on the crown of an immortal head. You are devoted to the sweetness and loveliness of drinking stamina of lotus, Rajni like a mother may she protect us.
4. Your eyes are like the moon, the newly risen sun, or fire. Having four arms you are seated on a seat, carrying conch shell, lotus, sword and trident, consort of Mahesha, I worship you Rajni in the form of Himalayas, mountains of snow.
5. Goddess Mridani, who gives devotees happiness, be gracious. Rudrani, who eliminates disease, be gracious. Sharvani, who destroys the sins of all the people, be gracious. Rajni who gives good qualities, Shiva, be gracious.
6. If remembered she destroys all inward impurities of people. Victorious is that Maharajni who bestows wealth on her worshippers.
7. Deluding the three worlds you are to be praised like the sun of the good qualities. Homage to you Maharajni, protect me who has come for your protection.
8. Both complete and incomplete, the source of innumerable best qualities, beloved, with a host of good qualities, homage to you.
9. Worthy of worship by demons, non-demons, humans, seers, Oh, you with lotus feet, homage to you.
10. The one who creates and destroys the universe of living and non-living, homage to you.
11. For the worshipper you are the wish yielding creeper. At the head of many vehicles, unconquerable, eternal, homage to you.
12. Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesha, all worship you, rejoicing in the mountains, homage to you.
13. You help the worshiper cross the terrible farther and nearer cycle of existence, homage to you.
14. Beautiful, without qualities, without activity, permanent, characterized by existence, thought and bliss, homage to you.
15. Devotee should read this Rajni hymn of praise three times a day. By doing so, he will get possession of the whole world without doubt, entirely.

(Translated into English by Madhu B. Wangu.)

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SHRI SHRI MAHA RAJNI PRADUR BHAVAH VIVARANAM
APPEARANCE OF THE TOWERING GODDESS IN IMMANENT
FORM
(FROM THE TEXT BHRINGISHA SAMHITA)
CANTO I

BHAIRAVI ENQUIRIES

1. That manifestation of the Goddess Tripura, known as Dvitiya and Taruna, was propitiated by the highly gifted Ravana, the demon.
2. She was installed in a pond replete with countless snakes at the North-Eastern quarter of Lanka. Seemingly, the Goddess looks like Tamsi. What is she in essence? Unfold to me, O my Lord, the knower of all.
3. O, great Lord, is she of *Tamsi*, *Rajas* or *Sattvashi* nature.
4. Lord, I have heard, that she has stationed herself, near the outskirts of Harmukha mountain, in sacred land of Kashmir, for dispelling the impediments of devotees. In *Kali yug*, she is *Vaishnavi*, strictly vegetarian, in *Sattvika* form, with purity and joy, in order to destroy all the troubles, which is even difficult for the gods.
5. With the intention of doing a favour to humanity, O God of gods, spell out candidly as to how and by whom, the Goddess, was carried there and in what form she was established in Kashmir."

BHAIRAVA REPLIES

6. O, charming Bhairavi, I shall describe the great adventures of Taruna, by mere listening of which devotees, can attain omniscience.
7. In *Treta yug*, Pulastya had a son Ravana by name, who was possessed by spite, short-temper, ego and vanity.
8. Ravana, decided to do vigorous penance for a hundred thousand years, without food, controlling his breath, and standing on the big toe of one of his foot.
9. Propitiating the author of this whole Universe, he gained mastery over his mind and sense-organs. O, Self, Dependent Goddess! Once, performing this most arduous penance, Ravana perceived...
10. A host of hunters giving a chase to a herd of boars in hot-haste with bows in their hands.
11. Those animals, the boars, being frightened, trembling for their life, wounded but not killed by the arrows of the hunters, repaired to the hermitage of Ravana.
12. Even though having attained mental equipoise, Ravana on seeing his penance-grove in utter disorder and confusion, reverted back to his formal spiteful nature, muttering the incantations with divided attention.
13. 'I shall annihilate all these hunters and creatures thronging every nook and corner here, with the strike of a single arrow', he thought. But respected the discipline relevant to the place where meditation, he has undergone.

14. Having meditated upon the Supreme Conscious spirit, he naturally got a disdainful glimpse of Almighty Shiva with his Unsavoury form of three eyes.
15. Thereafter, the Great Lord, revealed his illusory form to Ravana, who on perceiving it eulogized it and bowed unto it with extreme reverence.
16. That Almighty Transcendence asked him to opt for a boon and exhorted Ravana the demon, to propitiate *Shakti*, the Primal Energy—His immanent form.
17. "That Tamasi is beyond the the three gunnas, is glued with the towering Shyama, the ever-green energy, worshipped with fifteen lettered *Mantra*.
18. O, Ravana! Fix your mind upon her mobile yet illusory form since you do not refrain from hurting the creatures, though immersed in my thoughts.
19. Hence, you seek refuge in that Great Goddess forth-with, at whose command the three worlds exhibit clock-like regularity; who shall forsooth, provide you with all what you wish."
20. That Almighty Lord of gods, having delivered this exhortation to him, the highly gifted Ravana engaged himself in muttering the incantations pertinent to Goddess Tamsi, ever young and shimmering with solar luster.
21. After ten thousand years the Great Goddess appeared to him. The Goddess said, "O, my loving child, ask for a boon, which may even be unattainable by Kumara, her own son.
22. I shall grant to you the unrivalled sovereignty over the three worlds along with the bounties lasting for three ages and will become my devotee.
23. If you desire anything else even unobtainable by the gods, I shall verily grant that also. What-ever you wish, ask for its fulfillment."
24. Thus said, the Goddess to the great demon Ravana. He replied thus in a gentle sweet tone to the one who dispels the fear, *Bhavani*, the consort of Shiva.
25. " O, Great Goddess! If you elect to do me a favour, then reside permanently in my house and always be available to me."
26. " Having been thus implored by that highly talented demon Ravana, the Great Goddess with cheerful spirits, condescended to make Ravana's house, a permanent habitat for her ownself, in the shape of a huge furrowing flame surrounding the pond of Ananta, infested with numerous snakes.
27. Armed with the four weapons—the goad, the noose, the bow, and the arrow, in three-eyed manifestation, mounted on a majestic lion that Tamasi, the Immanent Energy.
28. Shyama by name, possessing youthful dark-blue hue, stationed at the *Ishana*, north-east corner, of Lanka, began to be worshipped by the demon Ravana, with unfaltering devotion.
29. Demons worship by sacrificing buffaloes, humans and with offerings of alcohol. O Bhairvi, that Shyama as *Para devi* accepted such offerings from demons as devotion.

30. That very Shyama, verily the evergreen Tamasi, the sparkling digit of Tripura, stayed for a long time there. Eventually she developed hatred towards the demonic sacrifices.
31. When being stationed in Ravana's house, she felt vexed by his omissions, and decided to proceed to Sati Desha, Kashmir.
32. From then on, the Great Goddess who grants *Rama raja*, was known as Maharajni, made Sati Desha, Kashmir, her abode and lived in Bhuvanesha, in the vicinity of Haramukha mountain.
33. O Devi, mounted on the serpent-king Ananta, surrounded by three hundred and sixty snakes, she was carried, there by Hanuman.
34. She passed Panchal mountains near Kapalamula, Kapal Mochan *tirtha*, she reached Vishnu Pad, which has conical stones.
35. She got down at *Madhya grama*, then again went to the banks of Vishnu Ganga and crossed mountainous Divasthala.
36. Going around the dense forest she reached heart winning Khilavarini. Seeing it devoid of water she left towards the north direction.
37. Then she reached a small village Svanupaga on the east of Martand. She saw Martand once and was fatigued on reaching Anantnaga.
38. Surrounded by snakes, sitting on the head of Hanuman, blessed Devi Rajni traveled whole of the Kashmir.
39. Sometimes she went to shaded Lokpur, modern Lok Bhawan, sometimes to shining Rayas-thal. Sometimes to village Vadipur, and sometimes to the water at the pilgrimage place Kotipur, modern Baramula.
40. Maharajni traveled to Chandipur, modern Chandigam of Lolab valley, and Tankarpur, finally coming back from Sharada to Kashmir valley.
41. In the end, Hanuman brought the Great Goddess, near the Sangam, confluence of river Vitasta and river Sindh, modern Shadipur, to a marshy area, the area of modern Tulmul, suitable for snakes, its whole edge surrounded by the river Sindh.
42. The Mighty Empress, observed, the place being fruitful and was happy. She spoke to Hanuman that the place was good for her.
43. She further said, "O, mighty child of wind, and first among worshippers, dear to Rama, help the snakes by staying here for a while.
44. Order the snakes to creep in the marsh softly and we will rest on the ground under the shadow of big trees."
45. Thus Goddess Shyama, who was embellished with several colours, different *Gunas*, different qualities, stayed here for a long time, became calm and composed, with peace and happiness.
46. Thus the resting place of Maharajni, became foremost mandla and is surrounded by other sacred mandals, Bhuvanesha, Chatumgesha, Labdhavana and Bhagoha.
47. O Bhairavi, of exquisite beauty! Where the ever bountiful land is as easy to handle, as soft as cotton, which can be had for none too exorbitant rates, that place has thus earned the name of Tulamulyakam, modern Tulmul.

48. Maharajni, established her own abode at Tulmul, and herself bid goodby to Hanuman, dear messenger of Sri Rama. Thereafter, she lived happily there and the devotees worship her in the form of *Shakti*.

49. On having stayed here, she became clam and composed, her diet being milk, clarified butter and candy. The Goddess personified in herself, the pervading transperance and occult incantations of fifteen syllables.

50. Seers obtain salvation by worshiping her. Sri Rama by meditating on her could kill Ravana of Lanka.

51. It was through her grace O Devi, Ravana's elder brother, Vibhishana, with tranquility of mind, acquired more than enough sovereignty over Lanka.

52. By meditating upon her all obtain complete attainment of their aim. The one who used to live at Lanka as Shyama became famous as Maharajni in Sati Desh, Kashmir.

53. That maiden whose skill is highest bestows *Rama raja*.

54. Approaching her through mind, bestows emancipation immediately. O Self- dependent Goddess, consort of Mahesha! She grants sons to the sonless and riches to those who crave for these. Those who desire to acquire knowledge, she grants unerring comprehension. Those who pine for a daughter are rewarded with a daughter.

55. Undoubtedly through the grace of that Almighty Goddess, to her devotees, she bestows wealth, corn, cattle, house and land, without any hesitation what-so-ever.

56. Her worshippers traverse the heavens, the space, and the earth with equal ease.

57. Unnerving fear of infections as well as contagious diseases, the scare born out of famine, the wrath of kings, are assuredly eliminated by meditating upon her.

58. One who is afflicted with great stress escapes distress, one who is sick is released from sickness or terrible calamities, one is released from all that.

59. The worshipper who becomes one with the Goddess attains salvation. Whoever recites *Mantra* and worships her *Yantra* is finally with the Supreme Spirit, Shiva.

60. There is no doubt that whoever worships the mother of the world, by the recitation of Mantras, the fifteen syllabic incantation, or even listening to it, his speech will flow like the flow of the sacred river Ganga.

61. That very Tripura, the Queen Par-excellence, known as Maharajni, personifying clam composure, is meditated upon by those who posses mental poise of highest magnitude, the Seers.

62. When having agreed to reside in the house of Ravana, Shyama in the form of Tamasi, was worshipped with twenty two syllables *Mantra*.

63. That very celebrated Shyama, the greatest of divinities, was offered terrible food. She was shown the way to the Sati Desh, Kashmir, by Hanuman and was carried personally by him there.

64. Accompanied by the lord of Serpents, Ananta, the Goddess following the consent of Sri Rama, when worshipped, grants the desired boons.

65.O Devi, I have unfolded all this to you responding squarely to your queries, that Shyama in the domicile of Ravana, became to be known as Maharajni in truth, on coming to Kashmir.

66.By listening to what I have said one is able to get released from the bindings of this world. One earns merit by hearing about the Goddess in *Kali yug*, which is equivalent to doing sacrifice for ten thousand years.

Thus the first canto containing the description of Tulamula in the context of Maharajni comes to a close.

**SHRI SHRI MAHA RAJNI PRADUR BHAVAH VIVARANAM
CANTO II**

SHRI BHAIKAVI ENQUIRIES

1. "O, God of gods, All knowing, Supreme God, please explain, I am desirous of listening extensively.
2. As to who is that Goddess Tripura called as such? How she elected to become Shyama? Why did Sri Rama worship her? Why did she come to Satisar, Kashmir?

O my beloved, the Great God! Unfold all this to me, I am always at your beck and call."

SHRI BHAIKAVI REPLIES

3. "O, daughter of the mountains! I shall enlighten you, all about what you would like to know. By mere listening, of which one can obtain every delight.
4. Ravana, the demon, was the son of Pulasty, the direct descendant of Brahma.
5. Out of compassion for him, once Mahadeva, having seen the demon weep, asked Pulasty about the cause of his son's weeping.
6. The sage answered, "O, Omnipotent Lord, Ravana wants to possess Lanka."
7. Lord Shiva, with a smile, told the sage, "O, Brahmin listen attentively, this child, your progeny, will undoubtedly bring disaster to the worlds.
8. O, parent of Ravana, I shall bestow upon him Lanka, provided he undergoes a great penance and earns the pleasure of Brahma, the creator."
9. Ravana, the tormentor of worlds, on hearing these words, smiled, bowing down his body out of reverence.
10. And said, "You alone are all pervading soul of Universe, O God of gods, the Great Lord!
11. O, Omnipotent Lord! I approach you with reverence, grant me refuge out of compassion.
12. Just as you say, Supreme God, for my benefit I should do penance by which Brahma is pleased."
13. Then Ravana, in his teens, went to Vindhya range of mountains, for penance.
14. O, Devil! Consequently Ravana, undertook terribly arduous austerities for ten thousand years, which is difficult even for gods, as well as humans.

15. Brahma was pleased with him and appeared in person to grant boon to him and said, "O, you son of Pulastya, favoured one, tell me quickly what boon do you want?"
16. Having heard these divine words, Ravana, the beloved of demons, said to Bramha, his great grandfather, Mahadevi.
17. "If you want to give me a boon, O, Lord of the world, give me Lanka, so that I am able to reside happily and no one is able to conquer me."
18. O, Maheshwari, having heard the words of Ravana, Brahma blessed him thus, "On attaining Lanka, you will become invincible through the grace of Lord Shiva.
19. As long as Mahamaya Sita is not brought to life, till then, you will be humans.
20. Thus Ravana was able to obtain Lanka, which was pleasurable for all the demons but full of sorrow for the gods. But he continued to pray to Shiva for ten thousand years. unconquered by gods, demons and
21. O Devi, Ravana performed rewarding penance on Malaya mountain, the abode of gods, still Lord Shiva was not pleased with him.
22. Narda, the emissary of the Supreme Being, approached Ravana. The sage of imminence, Narda went near him and said,
23. "Why are you cutting the best part of your body, the heads? This exercise will be all in vain without earning the pleasure of Lord Shiva.
24. Shiva is not in Kailash, Meru or Mandra mountains. Lord Shiva and his consort, are engrossed in Laysa dance in tune with the, *Naad*, rhythmic tappings of *Tambura* beaten by Nandi.
25. They are to be approached mentally. Wherever and whenever, the Great Lord hears this voice of silence, he becomes visible there and then. Hurting the body, worshiping or recitation and so forth, is of no avail.
26. Undertaking auspicious austerities, O you Ravana, Shiva can be pleased only by this *Naad*." Having said so, Narda, the crest of Brahmins, went away.
27. O Bhairaveshwari, the ten headed demon Ravana, had cut off his nine heads and had only one head left in front. He started to make a very frightful sound.
28. O consort of Maheshwara! On second thought, Ravana, emitted a very soothing sweet, imperceptibly awakening sound, through Yogic practice, by which the Great Lord,
29. Was awakened through the good offices of his principal attendant, Bhairava.
30. Thus Shiva manifested himself before Ravana and said, " O demon king Ravana of evil conduct, you have achieved what actually is unattainable. Whatever you desire to ask for, spell out immediately, even though that may be beyond the grasp of gods and demons. "
31. Ravana replied, " Give me Lord, Oh Great Protector, give me the condition of Bhairava, Oh Shiva, so that my *Naad* is able to awaken you.
32. O, Great Master, I am wedded to your unflinching devotion, restore all the ten heads to me as had previously.
33. O, Great Lord, I may be gifted with immence affection for the demons."
34. Shiva replied, " I confer Bhairavahood upon you, O fortunate one, you will have all the pleasures which this life offers."

35. Thus having attained this boon, the demon Ravana, tormentor of the worlds, yoked himself entirely to providing fleeting comforts to his kin, the demons.
36. Assuming most terrifying form, puffed with the vanity of wielding arms, Ravana leashed a reign of terror and travail for sages, the humans and the Gods.
37. In order to establish a religious institution, to protect the good souls, and destroy the demons, God Bhutabhavana, Rama was born.
38. During *Treta yug*, descended on earth in the sanctum of king Dasharatha as his son, withfull moon effulgence, multiplying the joy of Kausalya.
39. O, Benign Goddess! The protector of universe, Sri Rama accompanied by Sita, arrived in Lanka to annihilate Ravana for relieving the earth of its burden.
40. With the Vanaras, monkeys, as his legions, Sri Rama engaged himself in a terrible war with Ravana, in Lanka on *Saptami*, the seventh of the bright half of Asuj.
41. On seeing Meghanada, his son, and others being killed Ravana fearful of death asked Mandodari, his chief queen, in what way could this Rama, can be dispatched to death.
42. Mandodari said," Listen Ravana, Narada had told me this with much effection that Lord Bhuta -bhavana has himself incarnated himself in human form.
43. Possessing dark-blue hue, donning dark clothes, is always absorbed in the worship of the Dark One, Shyama, each day. At the appropriate time he will take Lanka and Sita and give Lanka to Vibhishana.
44. Then he will proceed back to his sanctuary in the Pushpa Vimana, aeroplane. Therefore, you your self with all endeavor, should give kingdom to Vibhishana.
45. You give Sita to Rama, so that we both seek refuge in auspicious Shiva, the all pervading Super Soul and most efficacious dispeller of the afflictions experienced by those who make obeisance to him.
46. We two will please, the most excellent Shiva with penance. The blessed God Shiva is always beneficial to his devotees.
47. By then, Rama would have gone home and we might get back Lanka."
48. Having heard these words of Mandodari, from her lotus like mouth, Ravana paid no attention to her and went to the place Devi Nikhumbala, Bhadrakali, another name of Shyama, was enshrined.
49. Ravana worshiped the Goddess with Mandodari and then said to her,
50. "O, Mandodari of immaculate beauty, Rama himself worships the Dark One, Shyama, I will ask him to come here.
51. And when he comes here with his younger brother and Hanuman, I will sacrifice him and his family to the Goddess.
52. There and then in the midst of the enclosure for worship, Sri Rama manifested himself. The tallest of demons, Ravana with a terrible look addressed to Rama,
53. "If you wish to preserve your life unscathed, leave Sita here and go home.
54. Otherwise, I shall offer you as a sacrifice in accordance with prescribed ritual."

55. The lotus-eyed Sri Rama replied, "O, evil and mean minded, why should we go home. I will take Sita and having taken Shyama, I will go home but only after destroying you.

56. I will give Lanka to your brother Vibhishana, a devotee and my friend." Having heard these words, Ravana became angry. On the day of *Astami*, in the middle of night,

57. Took out his sword and ran to attack Sri Rama. At that very moment, Goddess Shyama spoke to Ravana.

58. Her eyes dark with anger, her voice thundering like clouds clashing, the Mother of the Universe, laughed and said, "Shame on you demon.

59. I am going to my choicest place, to the most beautiful lake Satisara, Kashmir, in the Himalayan mountains and vow to follow vegetarianism.

60. Then Sri Rama in human form pronounced to Hanuman, " O Hanuman, the bravest of brave, take Sri Maheshwari, Shyama, along with Ananta to Kashmir, quickly. This will plough back immense virtue to you."

61. Hanuman said, "As you wish."

62. The Goddess put her feet on his back, and arrived in the northern region. Sri Rama went to his battle-field near the city.

63. Sri Rama said to his brother, " Ravana will be slain tomorrow, then we will take Sita home. For whom all people of Ayodhya are eagerly waiting."

64. Next morning on the battle-field, terrified Ravana softly uttered these words to Sri Rama.

65. "Rama give up your arrogance and Sita, go wherever you have to go and do not throw away your life.

66. If you do not leave, Rama, you will have to fight with me. If you think you are bravest then let us engage ourselves in duel."

67. Sri Rama told Ravana with extreme confidence, 'So be it, come to the battle-field.' When it was mid-day on *Navami*, ninth day of bright half of *Assuj*, Ravana's courage ebbed away, for the fear of Sri Rama.

68. The demon, struck by Sri Rama with his weapons lost his life.

69. The gods showered flowers, on Sri Rama and Apsaras danced.

70. Vanars, monkeys, from all direction gave a full-throated cry 'Victory'!

71. Since that day and night of *Puranamasi*, every fifteenth day of the bright fortnight of *Assuj*, Sri Rama in the company of Sita and his brother, undertakes a pilgrimage to Maharajni, in Kashmir in accordance with the prescribed ritual.

72. On *Ashtami* and *Navami*, the eighth and ninth day of the bright half of the month of *Assuj*, Mandodari and Vibhishana undertake pilgrimage to this shrine respectively. The mighty Hanuman stands guard there for all the time to come. On these auspicious days, the devotees should propitiate the Goddess for all-round success.

73. O, Auspicious Bhairavi, I have, in this way, unfolded to you as to how Goddess Maharajni appeared in Cosmic form.

Thus Rajini Pradur Bhava, Mahatmaya, has been narrated, by mere listening of which all successes are obtained.

English rendering by Prof. K.N.Dhar, Director, Parmanada Research Institute, adopted from Shri Shri Maha-Rajini Pradurbhavah, a leaf from Brngisha Samhita.

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APPENDIX II

SARADA MAHATMAYA

Glory of Sarada

Bhairavi said,

O, Mahadeva, Tell about the best forest of Sarada truthfully, Where having gone, Sandilya there got all his desires fulfilled. How, the Goddess who is named Sarada, who neither has a beginning nor an end, came to earth and assumed the three-fold form.

O, Mahadeva! desiring the welfare of the world, tell about her glory. Who is this Supreme Goddess bearing the designation of Sarada?

Bhairava said, O, Great Goddess, listen to me. I shall speak about the best forest named Sarada sighting which, one attains the highest accomplishments. The great Sage of high spirituality got a son named Sandilya, who bore semblance to him, from the daughter of a person of a low caste, (chandala)

O Great Goddess!

This son, whose body was dark and whose complexion personified darkness, on being ordered by his father performed austere penance in the vicinity of the mountain of the Great Goddess.

After securing power from the Goddess who protects the world, devoted to prayers and meditation, without taking any food, subduing his senses, He, absorbed himself in everlasting concentration on the thoughts of that eternal Goddess. In such manner when the high-souled Sandilya was meditating, there appeared a great dark complexioned effulgence of spotless lustre.

O Great Goddess, Mahesvari!

When that sage saw this strange thing, he was much astonished, neither able to speak nor act and benumbed, remained like a stump. That blackish great lustre vanished at once. When the Sage saw the invisibility of that Great glory, he was much astonished. In that grand forest Sandilya recalled his father. His father as well sent there Narada the good sage. After reaching there, Narada said to the best sage Sandilya. "O, the best Brahmana, meditate again on that power of the powerful One! which is dark possessing dark organs and is sinless. By doing so you will receive Her vision. "After seeing Her, all sins perish instantly." Saying that, Narada, disappeared from the sight of the sage.

O, the mistress of Gods.

That sage after having heard the words of the sage of Gods began to meditate again and continued his meditation for hundred years. And then saw that Goddess possessing dark organs.

O, the mistress of Gods.

As he greeted and praised the Goddess, having black organs according to due rites, then She said to him, "O, the performer of good vow, seek any boon that you desire from Me. After hearing Her words full of love, he said, "O, the Highest Goddess if you desire to give me a boon, then let all sins of my body be destroyed in this instant.

Thus hearing the words of high - souled sage Sandilya, The Goddess Shyamala (black) said to him, "My son, all things you shall achieve certainly." "From here go to Maharashtra bearing the name Shyamala. At that place you will see a Goddess called Sarada whose form is three fold.

"There you shall get your form of the Brahma." After saying this to sage Sandilya, that Goddess disappeared then. Recollecting the words of that Goddess Shyamala, the great Sage then headed towards that place known as Shyamala where all desires are fulfilled.

In that place the sage saw a hut that bestowed prosperity. Resting there, he began to meditate upon that grand Goddess. Then he saw in front of him, Her presence which was meritorious. When that sage praised Her, she at once ordered him, "O, the best sage, "At some distance from this place is a grand forest of Sarada ." "There when any one goes, his darkness is destroyed at the immediate instant. "In this way your darkness will be abolished and you will get your real form certainly. "Saying thus, the Goddess vanished and the sage there remained alone, feeling delight and happiness. After that he went to that forest near the river Kishen ganga.

Then the great sage having seen and touched the black Ganga with due rites reached Suvarnardhangka (half golden place) and felt greatly astonished.

O, mistress of Gods,

When that sage saw the half golden place, he went there and was himself seen as being possessed of golden limbs. "O my darling! That place even today is well known by the name of Suvarnardhangka. A person obtains arrival at Suvarnardhangka --the place where reside the scholars of Vedas by sacred ablutions, giving charity, by muttering prayers by worship and performing other meritorious deeds." "Therefore in this age of Kali, one who takes a bath with all sincerity and pious efforts in that place of Suvarnardhangka, his sin, even of killing Brahmana, vanishes away."

"If a man is afflicted by great or small sins, whether those sins are of this birth or committed in previous hundred births, after taking bath in this Srikrishenganga becomes relieved of all sins." "After that the sage full of joy desiring to see that Goddess, climbing the mountain reached at theatre abode. "There he saw the dance of Goddesses and became astonished. After greeting the Goddesses, he reached in the interior of abode."

"When those Goddesses saw that half golden sage, they began to say to each other. This is a half golden sage, and he certainly gifted with beautiful organs and limbs will leave this place."

O, wife of Mahesh, saying this, "the best group of those Goddesses began to dance with him and there after they disappeared."

O, the wife of Mahadeva,

"That sage saw the group of Goddesses busy in dancing who though were not clearly visible in that theatre abode." "The person who sights the forest of Goddess known by the name Rangavati, he becomes relieved of all dreadful sins even committed in many previous births." "Then the sage seeing the forest named Rangavati that resembled the city of Gandharvas was astonished. From there he marched further up." "O, the mistress of Gods, when that great sage advanced forward, his eyes were unable to see after seeing the strange forest."

"The place where the sage was astounded and felt as if deceived, the forest is famous by the name of Gostambhana. (a place where senses cease to work).

The people of that place told the sage, "One who after seeing the Gostambhana Vana takes bath and gives charities, becomes relieved even of the dreadful accusation of murder charges. This fact is quite true". "Then in the company of these baffled people, the sage was all the more astonished. There after he saw the forest named Shanya Tejvana that was situated on the bank of Ganga." He then saw the sage Gautama sitting there and reaching him greeted repeatedly. The sage then expressing kindness asked the baffled Sandilya. "O, Brahmana, what have you seen as extra ordinary in this vast divine forest. This boon is achieved only by the power of Goddess, undoubtedly."

Then Sandilya said, "I was completely dark with a dark complexion, having taken birth from a dark belly, thus born to darkness. I have now become worthy of being seen".

Then the sage Gautama said. "You are as yet baffled, O, the best Brahmana and still feeling astounded. Now after taking a bath you shall acquire the supreme glory and restored to high position. "Hearing his divine words and taking bath in the holy water. he got back to his healthy senses and achieved supreme glory. Then the sage named Sandilya witnessing supreme glory in himself, Said to sage Gautama with profound respect, the respected sage, it is very strange that the place has an extra ordinary influence due to which I have gained my supreme glory."

O my darling, Hearing the words of that sage Sandilya, Sage Gautama said, O, Brahmana, what is there to feel so astonished. "O, the beautiful lady among the Goddesses, the wife of God Shiva.

After hearing the words of Gautama he advanced further from that place where he had regained the powers of his organs. The place where after reaching , he obtained the glory became holy and is called Tejavana which is a highly sacred place."In that place, O, the mistress of Gods, One should take a bath with a sincere effort, and one who takes a bath there, meditates, mutters prayer and worships also, he by those deeds is relieved even from the serious accusation of murder." "Any person having committed a small sin or a dreadful one on reaching the vast land of the Uttejana forest becomes free from dreadful adversity. "The place like the Uttejana that removes all dreadful sins, and being so divine, it neither existed in the starry sky nor in the central sky, and nor on the earth and will neither be in future as well. After that, going forward, the sage Sandilya climbed up the mountain and saw the divine God who is the Master of the Group and removes all obstacles. Then propitiating that God who removes all obstacles, he obtained his permission to go forward, and in full vigour reached the holy forest.

"O, the great mistress, as he saw that holy and pious forest of Sarada, he performed penance there for a divine thousand years."

O darling, at the end of divine thousand years, from the peak of that mountain a Goddess appeared, who has black, white and crimson colours. He saw the Goddess having many colours for thousand years. As She was Shyama (black) Shweta (white) and Rakta (red) the persons who knew old traditions began calling Her, Sarada. When that sage saw that Goddess having the body of three kinds, he felt strange and began to contemplate. O, great Goddess because the contemplating sage saw Her as Shah, (the multi hued pebble), so the persons who knew ancient history named Her, Sarada. As that Goddess was worshiped by all creatures, hence the experts of history named Her, Sarada.

As that Goddess had body like that of a streaked pebble, so She as well is called Sarada and Narada." "By the instruction of Narada, She was seen equipped with black organs, It is She who is called Saraswati. And by her grace on can be free from the impediment of tongue, meaning that by Her grace one can speak unhindered and fluent." "That Goddess who was Being faultless was seen in three manifest forms of body. Only She is considered as Sarada whose abode is, on the pious peak of the Sirahasila mountain." "When that sage saw that Goddess, he bowed prostrate like a staff and greeted Her with joy for a long time, and in melodious voice praised Her." "That Goddess who is the embodiment of consciousness and bliss, in whom the whole world abides, who takes her devotees beyond the realms of universe, removes darkness and is the Highest One, only do I accept in my mind the shelter of that Goddess, Who is called Sarada."

"Because I who was stained with sins, and relieved naturally, so all thoughtful people will call you by the name Sarada." "As you possess the great powers of consciousness and consideration, are the source of supreme bliss and, the benefactor of all Gods and Goddesses. So I have

come only to Thee for shelter." "Whose form of Rajas and Tamas are hidden, who is named by One syllable Om and who has many forms, I seek the shelter of that Goddess called Sarada." "Though She has a dreadful form and yet not cruel, Being dreadful to the wicked but, kind and auspicious for the good ones .She has many names, such as Shravani (wife of Shravana)Rudrani (wife of Rudra) and Hridani (the source of bliss).I bow to that Goddess. I also greet that Sarada who possesses hundreds of Rudras (dreadful divine symbols) and who is the greatest of all and everlasting."

"I greet that Goddess Sarada, Who to protect the world from the net of the Fire of Time, is ever prepared, who has the supreme form and is the supreme most of all."

"I get the shelter of that Goddess Sarada,who has the form of death, Being the Fire of Time, Who destroys all and also returns all."

"I get the shelter of that Narada Goddess, Who is black, has many coloured side sights Who gives happiness, is worshiped by the Bhargavas and Who showed her kindness to Narada."

"I praise such Sarada who can remove the defects of speech, is auspicious, beautifully inspiring and the best of all worshiped by Gautama and who is Durga and grants many boons."

"We praise such Sarada who resides in a dense forest, has three forms and three colours and who having three huts there lives on Shrishaila."

"I accept the shelter of that Sarada Who deserves meditation , but can not be known for all her bounty who deserves to be known, grants consciousness and gives power of consideration and who is the form of consciousness and has beautiful eyes."

"Those who are netted by the curses of sex, anger, fear and madness get liberated by Her, Who presides the three domains of three worlds, the earth and both parts of the sky and Who is adorned by three kinds of dresses,I bow to that who is called Sarada and Narada as well."

"I bow to the Goddess who makes her devotees fearless. Whose boons are like the bows and arrows, who possesses Trishula (the trident) like a bedstead Who has three eyes and whose laughter is very pleasing." "I seek the shelter of that Sarada who possesses six arms and abides with six qualities, Is above three elements (the Sattva, Rajas and Tanias) and yet in whom all these three elements remain. Who is the basis of all, creates all things and possesses divine qualities." "I praise such Sarada, the giver of boons, Who is beyond the past and the future, is divine, has the form of Mahamaya, is sitting on such a seat of bedstead that is above to those of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Who controls all kinds of dark attachments and yet has the form of intense illusion, and who assures the welfare of those netted by dreadful attachment."

"I am bowing to such Sarada, Who is the shelter of those engaged to save the poor and orphans, who relieves from the net of Siva whose arsenal can make mad, Who by suggesting pious ideas is very sacred, and is the embodiment of supreme bliss, who is venerable and - immeasurable by any, whose position can not be known completely, Who lives in this abode pervading the whole universe".

"IF this manner after praising, the sage Sandilya began to practise penance that destroys all sins."

"O, the mistress of Gods, that sage alone inhaled the air and did not eat any food, as he was keen to see the Goddess. In that way practising astute penance a long time elapsed,

And at last the Goddess was pleased. And what followed thence must be heard carefully."

"As the Goddess looked at the animal Rhinoceros, She was pleased and the animal as well felt liberated undoubtedly." At that place the Vaishnava, the Brahmana, Kshathya and the Vaishya, every one must perform a fiery penance even the animals." "As the Vaishnava and persons performing their bow do not eat the meat of the Rhinoceros, it invites no sin."

"O, the wife Suresha, the meatless food makes the Shambhu happy, and also the Goddess is pleased with such a vegetarian person." "The devotees should worship Ganesha with the meat balls of fish. This secret fact told by me purifies and increases love." "In this manner seeing him engaged in penance, that great Goddess was pleased. She arrived there accompanied by sage Durvasa and other sages."

"When Sandilya saw the presence of that Goddess in front of him, he bowed falling down like a staff. The Goddess took him up and began to say" "Remaining there atop the mountain, the Goddess said, O, Sandilya, you will live for a long time in peace and comfort. You will earn good deeds due to me and the presence of Bhairava as well".

"O, my son, get up now and come near to me. I shall give you the boon of Vedas and their organs at this place only." "O dear, respectful to me, I shall relieve you certainly of even the three kinds of debts. After saying this that Goddess Being disappeared, and took her seat at the Shrishaila."

O, the mistress of Gods and beautiful Goddess. "Sandilya too reached there where that Goddess was present. And while on his way there the half body of that great soul turned golden" "Seeing his half golden body he felt extremely happy and astonished also. He began to contemplate in his mind".

"What is that deed of mine due to which my body has become golden. Is it due to any grandeur of this place or by the effect of the water of this place? Or is it due to the kindness of Sarada .Who is the Goddess of all Gods?"

"O grand Goddess, when the great sage was thinking thus, and astonished too, his forefathers then came into his sight". "As he saw his forefathers present in front of him, he was amazed and asked them, "Who thee are in front of me." "O the best people, please tell me why have you come here. What is your purpose. I am thine servant so tell me now, Tell me what can I do for you. I am fully prepared to obey thee." The ancestors sayeth. "Dear son we are you forefathers. A long time has elapsed as a result we have become very week. Due to the defect of mixture of castes you are now present in the Sudra caste." "Now we desire to drink handful draught of water served alone by you.

O dear son, that should be given from the River Indus, So will that indicate you extraordinary devotion towards us." "The handful water that you shall offer will please us. The person who being able, and yet does not give the present of water, the source of pleasure and neither does perform the *Shrada*, he becomes poor. O dear son he begets no issue and thus causes the destruction of his race."

"For these reasons good people must always present handful water to their forefathers, and so too must perform their *Shrada* with the offerings of honey, Ghee (clarified butter) fruits and sweet milk-food."

O mistress of Gods,"In this way having said thus, they fell silent, and seeing Sandilya offering handful of water, they became much pleased." Then Bhairava said,

"When Sandilya heard their affectionate voice he was much pleased and astonished also. He praised his forefathers in voice full of joyous pleasure." "O the gathered ancestors, I shall now itself, offer thee the ablution of water at the Indus and have all my hair shaved for obtaining the purity to perform the *Shrada* of my forefathers". "The persons who get their hair shaved to perform *Shrada*, their forefathers become pleased, and the performers achieve good results." "In this manner saying that to his forefathers, the great sage pleased them. After getting his hair shaved there, the best sage Sandilya performed the *Shrada* according to due rites to please his forefathers. He as well offered the ablution with water to both the Gods and his forefathers." "O the mistress of Gods, at that time, the water of the great river, which Sandilya took in his hands turned into honey which satisfied his forefathers."

"O the great Goddess, that source of Indus, when came into the hands of that sage, its half then turned in to honey giving pleasure to his forefathers." "The spot at which Sandilya took the water that pleased his forefathers, the flow of Indus thence after became to be known as Madhumati". (one that contains honey) "O the wife of Siva, that sage Sandilya regained his good complexion and the improved caste due to the pleasure of his forefathers, and so too became himself happy." "In the fore part of the Madhumati, at the junction of the Indus that sage after taking a shave and bath performed the *Shrada*.

Then the great Goddess Mahadevi appeared and said to Sandilya." "Those present in this forest, who respect your having a shining body and also worship Me, and see my three forms, those emancipated people are called the Siddhahs. O son ,they get rid off all the sins doubtlessly." "If one is netted in big or small sins but sees the place named Pithesvara, he shall become relieved from all the sins."

After saying this,O great mistress, that Goddess again was silent. Hence one should seek refuge in the forest of Sarada with all sincere efforts." "After reaching the hut there he greeted the habitants of it. There he kept a fast for the night extending three times of twelve nights. All through this period he fed them with respect saying auspicious words. From there he went to Suvarnagnka, a place situated on the junction of the well known river Madhumati." "where there are sixty thousand and sixty hundreds of holy spots where people always reach in the month of Bhadrapada." In the moon - lit nights on the fourth day and also on other days, and always on fourteenth moon- lit night sighting the Gostambhana. By your grace, O the mistress of Goddess, one should enter the forest of sages"

"Then after greeting the sage, O Goddess, the Goddess Sarada, who has three names should be greeted with, perfumes, flowers, sandal, milk, sugar, Ghee (clarified butter), lights having wicks of camphor, edible gifts cooked in Ghee and different kinds of other sacrifices. Besides, She should be worshiped according to due rites, with the offerings of garments and ornaments." "Any virgin girl after greeting the Brhamans, should be offered the charities of cow, horses, garments, edibles and ornaments."

In this way by worshipping that Goddess adorned with a beautiful face, the devotee gets everlasting results undoubtedly. The issue-less persons beget able sons, the poor earn sufficient money, the uneducated learn good science, the sick are restored to health. And those seeking salvation, achieve it.

"O beautiful lady,those who desire to go to Sarada, those who even begin to start from their houses, they achieve the fruits of Ashvamedha step after step as many as there are particles of dust in the way. Performing fast for one, three or ten nights, one can secure the boons of Sarada, by uttering, greeting and washing of feet, offering the ablutions of water, by cleaning the face and by giving presents of things mixed with honey. After that, by dancing, singing to the accompaniment of instruments of music, and the offerings of elephants, horses, chariots, garments and birds, he achieves all kinds of wealth as stated earlier. The glory of the region of Sarada can not be described even by the four- faced Brahma."

"O the beautiful lady, the rest of the boons can not be described by me. I have stated only those that you sought to know from me"

"O the mistress of all Gods, now what more do you desire to hear from me, The description that can destroy serious sins in the age of Kali, is unexplainable. One who hears or reads it, he is relieved of all sins committed even in hundred lakh births."

"This text of Sarada Mahatmya taken from Bhringisha samhita in the collection that describes holy places of the northern part of the country comes to an end. Completed on the ninth day of Bhadrapada the Monday being the era 4968."

(English rendering by Prof. V.P.Shastri)

APPENDIX III
KOTI-TIRATHA MAHATMAYA

Glory of Koti - Tiratha,
Glory of Gaya, the mythical Tiratha Sangraha (a text of sacred abodes) by Pandit Sahibram,
Glory of Dhyanesvara, Glory of Pingleesvara, Manifestation of Bhadra Kali in the Mahabharata.
Glorification of Trisandheya (the time notes of the dawn, high noon and the dusk),
Glory of Mahadeva (Lord Siva), Glory of Varha region as depicted in the Varha- Purana.
Glory of Sarada (the Goddess of learning), Glory of Svambhvagni (the self born fire)
Obeisance to Lord Ganesha (the God of wisdom and obstacles) Aum.

In the forest called Naimisa, the great seers, the ascetic Saunaka and others who were engaged in meditation with mind and actions, devoid of all physical activities, and who were still like fire in a wind-less place, who concentrated on Lord Damodara (Krishna), Shedding tears from eyes, they were absorbed in deep meditation. Engrossed in the thoughts about universe and talking to each other about the glory of supreme ruler, the Glory which can not be perceived by eyes, they passed the day as if in a moment. Then towards the evening, there arrived Lord Narada, Beholding the blooming lotus-eyed Narada, all the great sages conversed with him.

The sages said, "O, the illustrious Supreme Lord, the dispeller of all doubts! "You are the treasure of the knowledge of the Brahman. We are fortunate. The sacred places of worship which are found in the three worlds, were all brought to the region of Kashmir by Kashyapa (one of the creators of the world) himself. Greater is the order of Brahman. Who all, on this earth have the power to count these best and great Tirathas (the holy places of worship). "Here in Kashmir exists Sati (the Goddess Parvati) herself personified as river Vitasta, who destroys all sins and by merely thinking about Whom, one gets the same reward as is received by bathing in holy places of worship. The water of river Saraswati takes three days to purify a man. That of Yamuna takes seven, while the water of Ganga purifies a person instantly, but the water of Vitasta has the power to purify even by mere thought of it.

Hearing these words of the sages, Narada replied.

Narada said, " You righteous sages are yourself verily the personified forms of the holy places of worship on this earth. One may obtain the fruit of pilgrimage by a mere sight of you."

"O ascetics! I will tell you something that I heard directly from the Lord.

O greatest sages! Listen about that which is capable of consuming all sins. I will tell you of that adorable method by which you shall obtain

perfection and about which once Lakshmi - the Goddess of fortune asked Lord Visnu in privacy.

"By mere winking of whose eye even the vile and wicked people obtain glory, such Lakshmi (seated on lotus) endowed with all humility, full of modesty spoke to her dear Vishnu." Lakshmi, the Goddess of fortune said,"O the master of Gods! By your grace, the fourteen worlds existing in the abyss of universe have been beheld. O Lord ! seating on the back of Garuda, the great Narayana along with you saw the seven nether regions and also the immensely spread divine holy places of pilgrimage".

"O Almighty, the Omnipotent! Now these incapable weak men in the age of Kali desirous of getting the reward of fruit of bathing in the sacred places of pilgrimage and that of giving alms in charity are seeking to know, if there is any such place that is blessed both by the presence of Gods the sacred places of pilgrimage,O Lord! speak to me about that sacred place of worship by which the sinners would obtain salvation. If on this earth a person has a desire to obtain the fruition of pilgrimage, then O Lord! what is the way by which he may obtain the virtuous reward resulting from visiting all these sacred places of pilgrimage""In this region of earth , it is not possible for men to visit all the sacred places of pilgrimage, O Vishnu ! speak to me about that supreme holy place of pilgrimage which has the power to destroy all sins and by which the liberation from sins of all human beings may be brought about". The Lord said"O great Goddess Lakshmi, I shall narrate to you, in this age of Kali, about the best acquirement gained by visiting the sacred place, which is the annihilator of all sins, and which is the remover of all blemishes of the Kali Age".

"O great Lakshmi! The sage Kashyapa performed an austere penance for twelve thousand years. He asked for a hermitage i. e. a place in a forest to practice penance".The ascetic Kashyapa was given the Sati - Lake as a place to practice penance. Since there was no water in the lake, the water was sprouted out by striking the Trident in the nether world. Only the place Vitasti was struck with the Trident. From there came out Parvati, in the form of running water, that ran down as Vitasta - the destroyer of all sins. Therefore, the village became well known as Vitasti in Kashmir." "Here the greatest sages, Kashyapa and others, Brahma and the three causes of the Creation, Sustenance and Annihilation, the Gods and Seers and the Vitasta assembled in order to remove all obstacles and counteract all impediments."

"Now O Deveshi, the mistress of Gods ! Listen about the place where all the sacred places of pilgrimage and Gods met together in one place. That holy place is designated as Koti Tiratha. Those who desire release from re-birth, take a holy dip, offer prayers, sit in meditation and perform sacrifice there." (in Koti Tiratha)"Be so that the new moon-day falls on Monday or even on a Sunday when moon is visible and on the twelfth day when sun transits from one constellation to another, that happens to be the twelfth day of the fortnight, the bathing in the holy place is supposed to yield imperishable reward. Those holy places which exist in three worlds are all found in the Kashmir range. Those holy places situated in the village of Vitasti, all have their source in the place called Varhamulka, modern Baramulla, imprinted by the image of Visnu in the form of a boar. Koti

Tiratha is the asylum of all those Varha Tirathas. Therefore all antiquarians quote the Koti Tiratha".

Lakshmi said, "O Lord of Gods ! When did Lord Visnu manifest himself in the form of a wild boar and for what purpose ? Tell me if I am your beloved."

The revered Lord said, "Listen O Gracious Lady, because of my affection for you I will narrate about the incarnation of the high- souled boar that is hard to find in all the worlds".

"There happened to be a demon called Hiranyaksha (One with the golden eye) and also a demon named Hiranyakashipu. O Ishvari (the Goddess)! They kidnapped the earth though it was submerged in the water. O my dear! Lord Vishnu manifested Himself in the form of a boar and extracted the earth out. Famed as boar the Yajna sacrifices verily spelled about the merits of the earth. Beholding, O my dear, the form of wild boar pervading everywhere, Lord Vishnu incarnated as a boar placed the earth on its tusk. The Gods got bewildered to see the earth placed on the tusk of the boar. The place where the tail was seen by the people came to be called as Poonch, where the head of the boar was beheld, that place was called Siro - desa. Where the landing uproar occurred, that place came to be remembered as Ghatta-mulapa."

"Where the radiant thigh was seen, that place was proclaimed as Uru - desa. At that particular moment, O the ruler of Gods! all the Gods who performed worship, their desires being fulfilled, the place was called Kamarat i. e. the sovereign that fulfills the objects of desires. The Varakarupa, person designated as Uttara, who while taking out Him for the sake of worship, where on earth, killed the host of enemies like Kaunapa i. e. those demons which feed on corpses and other demons, that place known as Lolava is situated in the northern direction. There in that sacred place of worship stayed virtues and truth for a long time, Kashyapa performed an austere sacrifice according to the rites prescribed in the scriptures for thousand years in the Sati Sarovara (Sati Lake). The ablutions that were offered to that sacrifice which had assumed the form of a boar became the mountain which was designated as Varaha in that place".

"Where he (Kashyapa) performed sacrifices of the pious offerings, the heap from bottom to top became popular as Varaha mountain, therefore, that sacred place of worship is known as Varaha-mulka and because, O my beloved dear! the herds of demons were uprooted by Varaha, therefore that holy place is called Varaha-mulka by the antiquarians. By taking a holy dip in the sacred Varahamula, one attains the same reward as that accrues from charity, by worshipping Siladevi one obtains the merits of performing a Jyotistoma - the fire sacrifice".

Lakshmi said, "Now I wish to listen about Siladevi with complete and certain settlement. Who is this Siladevi? What is the fruition of worshipping her" Tell me.

The Lord replied. Listen O benevolent lady, I will speak about the best virtues of Shailja (Parvati) the daughter of Mountain." "Having heard about whom, a man attains coveted perfection very soon. Previously (in earlier times) on the auspicious and very beautiful mountain region called the Himalaya, Lord Shiva engrossed in a state of trance, although tormented and stricken with the agony of grief of separation from Sati,

practised penance for divine thousand years. Beholding Shiva in the state of trance, the supremely holy mountain ordered his daughter Parvati to attend on Lord Shiva with all remedies like courteousness and politeness, and with exclusively devoted mind and unperturbed intellect and wisdom". "Beholding Lord Shiva, seated in deep meditation, a fear entered into the mind of Gods. In order to cause the birth of Kumara, the God of Love (Cupid) was sent by Gods. Seeing the Cupid standing in front of Him, Lord Shiva was annoyed".

"He (Lord Shiva) rendered the Cupid bodiless by reducing him to ashes by the fire of His wrath and thereby agitated the world. Having perceived that the Lord of Mountain -Shiva was agitated, the Holy Mountain spoke to his daughter, "O my daughter, Transform yourself into a rock, otherwise Lord Shiva might reduce you too to ashes, O young girl!"

"On hearing the great words of the Mountain, the great Goddess went far away towards the auspicious western crest and turned herself into a rock." "At the time of deluge (the total annihilation of the existence), Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of a boar in order to slaughter the demon Hiranyaksha and to rescue the earth. Having heard about the slaughter of Hiranyaksha, the rest of the demons stayed fearlessly submerged in the sacred region of Lake Sati".

"O Goddess, having known that the demons had concealed themselves in the lake, Varaha-the Boar stayed there, O Lakshmi ! in order to extricate them from there. Having seen that arrogantly proud herd of demons, Vishnu cutted the crest of the mountain with his Chakra (sharp edged disc weapon of Vishnu) in order to drain out the water, The flame that originated from the blow of the disc rose high up in the sky. Varaha saw the same halting on the rock. "One should meditate upon the Goddess dwelling behind that rock, the Goddess who was seated on a lion, whose hands were radiant with the arrow, bow, a tying noose, an iron hook (goad for driving an elephant), who was clad in red clothes, who was besmeared with red flowers, red garland and the rest, who was adorned with a half-moon on forehead, who had three eyes, a beautiful smile, who was adorned with ornaments of the upper arm, a necklace, a bracelet and an anklet, who blessed the devotees with the boon of fearlessness.

"Then, Varaha finding that the great rock was an obstacle, he adored and bowed before it, with due rites lifted it with his hand and put it aside. The retinue of the Goddess attending upon Her became aggressive, showed valour, when they saw the rock being removed. Beholding the attendants of Hari, who also came out of water, the Goddess Rock saw Lord Vishnu in particular, who took his disc and with high charge proceeded towards the Goddess. Then the Great Lord Vishnu attacked the Goddess Rock again with the discus but the discus got blunted. That was something very astonishing. When Lord Vishnu saw the blunted wheel, he became greatly amazed and was perplexed. He eulogized the Goddess and again stood in front of Her."

Seeing the Goddess, Vishnu spoke, "O Goddess- having a pure smile! Give way to me so that I can drain out the water. I will offer propitiation and ablutions to you."

"Hearing these serene and tranquil words of the high-sold Vishnu, the Goddess replied, O'Lord of God's immediately provide a dwelling place for

me and my attendants and also the offerings for us to eat. Having heard these words, of the daughter of mountain herself, Lord Vishnu the Lord of God's said, "I will give a dwelling place to you and your retinue. The bank of the pious river Vistasta verily will be your place to reside on this earth for a long time and below you will be the dwelling place for your attendants. I shall provide you food for eating. There should be no doubt about it." Having spoken thus to the daughter of mountain, Vishnu struck the bank of the great river Vitasta with his foot which then turned into a big large river like the Ganges".

"The attendants who dwelt under the water beneath that, O' Goddess with a desire to protect the sacred place of worship, all those demons and attendants of Goddess who came out along with the water were given food. Having observed that the Goddess and her retinue were properly fed , the Boar suddenly lifted the Rock with his arm in a great speed, put it on the bank and stood there. O' gracious good lady ! the attendants, who were in the form of rocks, they also stayed at the bank.

"O" Goddess! then the sacred water of the lake flowed out. The Lord Achyuta (the infallible One) became very happy and was delighted to see the flow of water. He then greeted the Rock and those great attendants of the Goddess. Vishnu installed the Annapurna (the Goddess that provides the grain)."

"Since then who so ever puts the offerings and makes ablutions with the portions of food like grain and rice etc. on that Rock, he is rid of the calamity if he is beset by adversity and difficulties. The bonded person is freed from the shackles of bondage. He becomes prosperous with sons, wife, wealth , crops, cattle, friends and union with wife. He will be happy and victorious. One desirous of emancipation becomes emancipated, the one desirous of obtaining a son is blessed with a son. By worshipping the Goddess Rock, one desirous of the fulfillment attains all the desired objects. Having worshiped all beings, staying there on the Rock by various graces, a man gets all desires fulfilled. This is the truth, the truth I am telling you."

O" Goddess Rock ! "protecting that sacred place, may you remain in that auspicious region having the image of Visnu in the form of Boar, along with your retinue till the final annihilation of the world is brought about." The Boar spoke thus to the Goddess and she then disappeared.

Lord Vishnu said, "since then O Lakshmi ! on that pious bank of Vitasta, the Goddess Rock well established by Visnu became famous . Hundreds of companions of the Goddess who remove all obstacles of that sacred place of worship accept offerings from people and bless them with their blessings". "Therefore, one should worship the daughter of mountain who is capable of conferring all the desired boons on the bank of the great river Vitasta with all possible efforts." Having taken a bath in the vicinity near Shailja in the holy place of Vitasta - Koti one gets the enormous merit as is obtained by performing Jyotistoma (the fire sacrifice). The pain which Lord Vishnu experienced on account of putting aside the rock from that holy site on the bank of river, the same was suddenly relieved by the holy sight of that Tirath a which the reliever of sins. Therefore, that holy place is called as one which relieves one of all the sins."

"In that Koti Tiratha a person should give in charity whatever objects that are dearest to him, after making ablution and particularly after performing the *Shradah* (ritual procedures performed for the dead kith and kins) . Having invited the respectable Brahmans, one should donate alms to them in numerous ways. There in that holy place, one should not commit violence, one should avoid union with woman. One is rid of fear and disease by talking about that pious Tiratha. "One should worship the book by numerous and varied auspicious substances, by gold and objects of pearl and also by bracelets and the armlets, doing so a man will always be freed from great sins. The Gods and the forefathers will remain gratified for hundred *Kalpas*, there is no doubt about this. Therefore, in Koti Tiratha and in Varaha region a man should always perform righteous deeds, give charity to the best of one's capacity conducive to the happiness in this world as well as in the other."

O' Goddess! 'Thus have I elucidated Vitasta excelling the ten qualities of Varanasi and more than hundred qualities of Prayaga along with the food and edible offerings."

Lord continued, "Now O' Goddess listen about the great merits of the Koti Tiratha . Formerly at the time of consecration of Indra, O' Lakshmi ! crores of pious places assembled in the auspicious Varaha region . There O' beautiful damsel the aforesaid pious river Vitasta conjuncted with the Koti Tirath . A flood of sacred places in Koti Tiratha have the power of removing all the sins and obstacles. One should make ablution in Koti Tirath and also in the water of river Vitasta, thereby one is released from crores of sins."

"The river Vitasta, in which one takes a plunge for bathing at numerous places here or there, destroys sins particularly in the Varaha region, where crores of sacred places take resort in her(Vitasta). Therefore, one should bathe in the water of Vitasta with all endeavour and preserving effect. Particularly in Varaha where Koti Tiraths unite it. One should take bath in Koti Tirath, as merely by bathing there a man always attains the rewards of performing an *Ashvamedha* (offerings accompanying a horse), the fruits of performing a *Jyotistoma* (a fire worship) or a *Naramedha* (offerings of the humans) "One should take bath in the sacred place called *Surbhi* (the Lord Indra's cow - daughter of Kamadhenu) and give alms . Give charity- as desired , thereby one is rid of all sins and attains everlasting merit. Indeed O' the mistress of Gods ! Vitasta existing in Koti Tirath and united with the abodes of Soma (the moon elixir), Surya (the sun) and Agni (the fire) burns terrible and fierce sins."

"Where the *Trayi* (three streams of Vedas) - the confluence of Rig, Sam and Yajur mixed with the three brilliant lights originated there in the Koti Tiratha., that became a river, it surely burns *Trimal* (the three filths) and also the three qualities of human nature i.e the *Satva*, the *Rajas*, and the *Tamas*. There should be no doubt about it."

"In Koti Tirath where, there is the auspicious river Godavari, the pious and great Kedar, the magnanimous region of Vishnupad and also the Pushkar region, all the pious places belonging to all the three worlds united with Vitasta, the greatest of the great sins are destroyed by drinking water and having taken a bath there. "Even Gods covet birth in this mortal zone . May there be our such human birth in this mortal world in this very Bharata

division particularly, we may have ablution in this river in Koti Tirath fed by a confluence of Tirthas. "If one takes a plunge in Vitasta river in Koti Tirath it annihilates instantly the sins like Braham Hatya." (i.e the killing of Brahman in the age of Kali.) "Specially in Varaha where it meets with Koti Tirtha, O Devadevi! the mistress of Gods the Gods in heaven crave for it (the Vitasta) day and night. "This, verily, is the great infatuation; this is supposed to be the Avidya (ignorance) by learned and wise people. In this great holy place called Koti Tiratha, even though situated on the earth, the people who do not take bath, are thwarted by impediments, therefore, one should take resort to the Koti Tiratha with all possible efforts.

"O beloved ! a dip in Vitasta destroys sins. Solidly increases good merits , deeds in a moment . One is freed from all fierce sins. " The Lord said, "In olden times the cow named Surbhi came along with Indra, crores of sacred places, also all the gods came together. "Kinners (the demigods) Siddhas (the accomplished) Gandharva (tribe of musicians) Pannaga ((the serpents) Uraga (the serpents) Rakshasas (the demons) Saritah (the rivers) Sagara (the oceans) along with attendants of Rudra (Shiva) Nagas (demigods) Matragana (all the gods) consecrated (Shakra) i.e, Indra , hosts of celestial damsels danced. At the occasion of the consecration of Indra, (Vidyadhar) (Charaj) Yaksha Kushmand , and the Bhairava, all arrived there together in Koti Tiratha".

"On the 12 th day of moon lit fortnight of Badra month they sprinkled holy water on the head of Indra . At that time Surbhi - the best of all cows sprinkled nectar on the head of Indra. O Goddess , worshipped by the best of Gods! having made the ablution to Indra with the pious water of sacred places, the crores of Tirathas went to their respective abodes. Seated on the affable throne, Shakra (Lord Indra) spoke to the righteous gods."

O Gods! take your positions in the holy and the virtuous Koti Tiratha. By taking a plunge in the Koti Tirath on the 12 th day of moonlit fornight all the Gods go to heaven endowed with radiance and energy. Delighted, surbhi having consecrated Indra (performed Indra-bhisheka) slipped on the rock and stumbled down and went straight to the heaven. while stumbling down off the Surbhi the place marked with its foot prints became well known and auspicious as Kamdhenu. (the cow that fulfills desires). O born of the ocean i.e. Goddess Lakshmi, that extremely purifying reign of the cow is the bestower of great merit when visited specially of the eleventh day of pious Bhadra month. O beautiful lady! the place where the cow slipped down and the place marked with foot prints on the rock, the same became most sanctified place of the Surbhi Tiratha". "When a person takes bath in Dhenu Tiratha, when he performs the rite of Sharada (an act of reverential homage to a deceased performed by relatives) in the great holy place of Dhenupada and when he touches the water of Vitasta, he attains the same merit as results by performing Chandrayana, fast regulated by moon - the intake of food being diminished every day by mouthful for the dark fortnight and increased in like manner during the moon lit fortnight). There is no doubt about it.

"Any other sacred place similar to the Dhenu Tiratha which has the power to destroy all the evils of the age of Kali has never existed, nor shall ever be in Heaven, on earth or in the sky or the void of space.

"O great Goddess! the sacred place starting from the Dhenu Tiratha up to the Urva Tiratha is Vitasta which destroys the sins of men committed even in previous births. Beyond this is said to be the ordinary Vitasta. In this pious region Varha - mulka it is (Vitasta) the annihilator of all sins. O Goddess by taking bath in it, offering charity, by prayers and propitiation, it grants great virtues".

"From the head portion of the Boar up to Ushkarana separated from Uras (the middle part) up to Dhenu Tiratha is the border of Varaha region which like the merit and sins, of both banks, one obtains imperishable reward old or recent of good or bad deeds. Vitasta destroys sins at near the Auna Ashrama. By a mere plunge in the Vitasta all sins such as that of Brahma Hatya (the killing of a Brahman) and others are destroyed. Who so ever O Goddess, listens about the reward that accrues from bathing in the Vitasta, is released of all sins, evil deeds and attains union with the eternal Brahman. This is a secret protective cover which relinquishes all the great sins in this age of Kali. It is the bestower of all pleasures as well as emancipation, when heard, read meditated upon or contemplated."

Goddess Lakshmi said, "O Vishnu, my dear ! please tell me about the success of journey, power to impart prosperity, the gains from charity and the worship of Koti Tiratha"

The Lord replied," First of all one should do an act of special worship, there, with recitation, perform ceremony in which oblations are offered to the Fire God and others. O dear! one should do veneration of Koti Tiratha by offering clothes and ornaments, gold and silver ornaments dipped in milk, chanting Vedic incantations and mystical verses (of Tantras) in various ways. "Placing grains of food in a vessel made of bronze, one should propitiate the Goddess with the offerings of libation (water mixed with rice, Durva - grass, flowers and honey) flowers, incense, lighting lamp, light, sandal wood and respectful salutations.

"Now I shall speak to you regarding charity by giving which one attains immortality. A plunge in a sacred place without charity is regarded as the lowest dip. Fish also take bath in the water but they are not entitled to liberation. One should get the replica of Koti Tiratha made of barley flour".

"One should fill first the awl of the Trident (the weapon of Siva) with the pieces of gold, the middle one with copper and in the last awl of the Trident one should put silver. Having covered it with cloth, one should request a Brahman with all humility" you are verily the Brahma, Visnu and Siva yourself endowed with Iccha (the desire), Gyana (the knowledge) and Kriya (the activity). This is my donation to the Trident. Please accept it for my benefit' Offered with this incantation, O Goddess, this is the best charity pertaining to Trident. This one should submit to the readers for the sake of successful pilgrimage. Thus O, Goddess I have explained to you the best percept of worship. This is the pro-creator of all fortunes, capable of conferring the giver with all perfection. "

"Here ends the glorification of Koti Tiratha in Kashmir range as depicted through a dialogue between Vishnu and Lakshmi in Bhrngisha Sanhita."

APPENDIX IV

HARAMUKAT GANGA MAHATMAYA

Salutations to Goddess Ganga! Salutations to Narayana! Sri Bhairavi! Om. I am undoubtedly grateful after listening to the eternal glory of vaccaihusra ksetra of Haehi grama. Now I want to listen to about Ganga which emerged from the crown and wherein by taking bath and drinking, one is absolved of Brahmahatya (killing of a Brahmana). O Maheswara ! how the bones are to be thrown and how the journey is to be performed, O Maheshwara! what is the merit / fruit of Karanka and of that river.

O Mahesana! what is the merit of Satrughna and of Ramaradhana Tiratha (sacred place) and of Bharata Giri (Bharat mountain) and of having a hair cut there. What reward does one get after seeing (visiting) Disad. And what is the Mahatmya (glory /religious greatness) of Hahisipaddhati and of Hansadwara in Brahmasarovara and the glory of Asrubindu on Kaulasarovara, the merit of Nandiksetra and the religious greatness of Hukuta. O Hahadeva! O Parameswara! Kindly tell me, what fruit one may achieve from the *darshana* (visit to see).

Sri Bhairava, O Amaratama (best amongst gods) ! I will tell the glory of Mukuta Ganga, by whose thought even one may be immediately freed from the sin, It is Mukuta Ganga, because being freed from Hara, it roams on the earth (Mukta Kanatati). As it went on the earth after shedding the malevolence (Mukta kutiltanij), O Haheshwari! it is famous by the name Mukuta Ganga. Freed out of curiosity (Mukta Kautuhatat) by the goddess, with a desire to look at as it always roams on reaching the earth, so it is Mukuta Gangika. Formerly, somewhat an excessive joy arose in the mind of Dhurjati (one with matted hair) while jesting on the summit of Kailasa.

O the beautiful one, a wave of deliberative delight arose after having melted from the middle of the space of the heart and came out from the crown of Sambhu. There appeared Ganga personified and emulating Parvati, in front of him who was thus inclined to sport. The lord sported with her again and again in the beautiful garden of Kailasha. Seeing the angry goddess thus going, Ganga became perturbed (and) disappeared immediately in the crown of Jagadisa (the lord of the world). O Maheshwari hearing about Isana playing with her, the Aparajita (the invincible one Parvati) conveyed (her) anger towards Hara (Siva). Girija (the daughter of the mountain) hit Hara (Siva) with beautiful flowers. After seeing her going, Hara spoke to Girija smilingly. "O dear! What has happened? What has fallen out that you are striking (me) with various flowers and embarrassing (me) with various side glances again and again, After listening to these frivolous words of Girisa (one who resides on the mountain) Parvati (then) replied to fascinating Siva."Having been engaged in playing with some lady, your words are very disturbing, Your mind is very fickle and the body is full of tremor and a thrill (horipulation) is present on you, who have become apprehensive like a crow. You alone are impudent and how could you call me impudent, After hearing this, Girisa then replied to Iswari (the goddess),

O Devil! Who has been seen (by you)? Tell (me), where is she? Are you not becoming immodest?" After listening to these very agreeable words of the God, the Goddess got hold of the twisted locks of Maheshwar (the great god) with the hand. After loosening that bond (of hair), she cajoled him with side glances.

O Maheshwari ! the learned Goddess of the Gods spoke smilingly to the Lord "As she has played covertly with my husband for long,, so ,O Lord! while being on earth, she should wander profusely as a result of my words. Having fallen from the crown, O Lord! let the beautiful one roam about on the earth. Due to having committed the sin, she does not deserve to climb the crest, the matted hair of the honourable God, Descending on the earth, as it has moved in three paths, it is to be known 'Trineargaga (one who moves into three paths)" The Goddess stopped after uttering these words with anger.

O Jagad Ambika! After seeing her thus cursed by Bhavani, Hara immediately spoke the pleasing words to Ganga , "O dear! on the eighth day in the holy month of Bhadrapada , when the sun is present in Simha (constellation) O Devis! You move around purifying numerous men. The holy river Bhagirathi, though sullied by having into it the bones of the sinners and also the rivers along with lakes and seas should come and get themselves purified with its contact in the holy month of Bhadrapada when the sun is in the Simha constellation. O Maheshwari!listen, on the eighth day of Bhadra, who so ever baths, donates, performs penance, religious offerings and throwing of bones here according to the rites, the merit of that becomes hundred times.

O Maheswari! A mortal attains the reward from the Darsana (visit) of Hukuta which one gets by staying in Kasi for hundred years. The reward which a mortal receives after bathing for thousand years in Prayaga in the month Magha is undoubtedly received by bathing in Hukuta Ganga only for one day. Killer of a Brahamna, a stealer of gold , a drunkard, a violater of teachers bed, andone who indulged in sensual attachment with him is absolved, O Maheshwari! By taking a bath here Learned or unlearned, wanton or un-wanton is emancipated by taking a bath in Mukuta Ganga.

O Maheshwari ! there is no better sacred place, no higher merit than this, no better virtue, not even asacrifice, prayer and even the religious offering (homa) O Parvati! than the bath taken by one inthe excellent water fallen from the crown. What is the use of saying more.In Kali age, (Kali Yuga), a sinner should perform the pilgrimage of Mukuta Ganga with great effort (care/devotion). O Devi! In Siva's ordinance, merit of Mukuta Ganga where Karanka Ksetra, also the place known as Satrueha and Ramaradanaka Tirtha and the auspicious Bharata Giri and also the Disad Ksetra of Bhargava in the form of shaves of the hair is situated firmly and also Mahisipaddhati and Brahmasarovara Hansadwara, Krauncarandara and also Arubindu.

O Iswari !the Nandi ksetra, the most auspicious Mahakala ksetra, the very lofty peak of the mountain named Haramukha is told as hundred times from Hardwar and thousand times from Varanasi . And the holy Mukuta Ganga is the destroyer of great sins, so it has been enlightened by me hundred times more than Hardwar. The journey here should be performed

with great care by those desirous of salvation. O, one with beautiful face! A man or a woman taking bath in Ganga Sarovara attains great merit. It is absolutely true.

First chapter of the description of the greatness (glory) of Hara Mukuta Ganga from the compilation of sacred places connected with the theme of 'Waves ends.

Bhairavi O Lord ! kindly tell me about the journey (pilgrimage) of Uttara Ganga, after performing which, one is absolved of the sins of various births.

Sri Bhairava: Listen, O Devi! I will tell about the pilgrimage of Uttara Ganga, by even hearing which O, Maheswari! One attains the merit of the journey of Ganga . First of all, after performing the *Sharadha* (a ceremony performed in honour of the departed soul) at the auspicious period of time, according to the rites, one should then place the bones on the lotus leaf as enjoined. Then revering them with *Darbha* (a kind of sacred grass) and 'Gavyas' (products coming from the cow such as milk, curd etc.) and also the black sesame and white mustard seeds, covering (them) with linen and (then) worshipping Vinayaka (Ganesha) with Vedic mantras according to the rites, then after coming out of the house, should move towards the northern direction.

First of all, after having taken a bath in 'Vicarakunda', O Ambika! one should move to the holy 'Ambhoruha vana' (lotus forest). After taking bath in the 'Padmaka water' and then bathing in 'Hiranya Ganga', one should proceed to Vijihasrama. After taking bath there, O Maheswari! One should move to 'Gandharva Pura'. After taking bath there, O Maheswari! One should move to 'Sodasi'. After paying obeissance to 'Sodasi', a devotee then should proceed further. From there, O Maheswari! One should go to the great 'Vatyaligrama'. By bathing and drinking (water) there, one is absolved of 'Brahmahatya' (killing of a Brahmana). After taking a bath there, one should go to great 'Kar anka Tirtha'. After bathing and consecrating the bones in water and performing the 'Sharadha' one should go to Satru-geha again. From there to most sacred Tirtha of Ramaradhanaka. Having seen the sacred place and taken a bath there according to rituals one should ascent Bharata. After having seen Disada ksetra, in the glory of morning one should proceed to Mahesipaddhati followed by Brahmasara.

O Mahesani! One should go to 'Hamsadwara' particularly to 'Bhargutunga', from there to 'Asrubindu'. After taking the bath, one should move to Xaulasara'. After taking a bath there, one should take resort to 'Nandiksetra', a sacred place of 'Mahakala '(Siva). Then one should move to Ganga . On reaching the forest, O Iswari! One should also keep a fast. On the second day, after taking bath, one should perform the 'Astiksepa' (throwing of bones). After performing the 'Sharadha', according to the rites, feeding the Brahmanas with meals,especially the bulbous roots and fruits, O Iswari! One should gratify the Brahmanas with linen clothes, ornaments, cows, horses and also elephants, chariots, maids and desirable servants. One who satisfies the Brahmanas properly with extreme devotion, goes to the abode of Brahman, reaching where one does not grieve.

O Maheswari! One should make the image of Ganga united with a fish. After worshipping Ganga sitting on the lotus and placed on the copper urn with four golden, very beautiful linen clothes and ornaments, should offer that to the 'Acharya' (spiritual teacher) according to the rites. By saying the 'Mantra', "Whatever merit is earned by me due to the efficacy of presenting the image, let that be for the emancipation of my ancestors also O Prabhu (Lord)! I have done this darsana (visit) for the success of the journey (and) then making the gift with this prayer one should beg pardon of the Brahmana. By doing this, a man who performs the journey of Ganga immediately becomes "Rudra" or 'Visnu'. O Jagadamba! I have told you the most auspicious journey, after listening to which one may attain the 'Ganga snana" (bath in Ganga) day by day.

The second chapter named the description of the pilgrimage (journey) ends.

Bhairavi O Isana! O Maheswara! Tell about the 'Asthiksepa' (throwing of bones) and also the 'Sharadha" (ceremony in honour of the departed soul). In which manner a man could perform the best 'Asthiksepana' according to ones ability. Tell (me) all that in detail.

Sri Bhairava I will tell, listen O Devesi! On a pious, clear day, after taking bath , then carrying the bones and performing 'Sharadha" with care (and) then eating something in ones own house, one should proceed further after bowing to Sri Sodasi. There after, one should take bath in the holy Karanka Tirtha according to the rites. And then perform Sharadha with care after consecrating the bones with water and thus a 'Vidhijna' (one who is conversant with rites) should make the journey successful in the right manner.

O Mahadevi! And one who does not consecrate the bones with the water of 'Karanka', Ganga creates troubles.

Bhairavi kindly tell me clearly how this river get the name 'Karankika' in Karanka village and is regarded superior also.

Bhairava O Devil! Listen to an event which occurred on earth, by even listening to which one attains the fruit of 'Vajapeya' (a sacrifice). O Maheswari! The gods made a thunderbolt with the pile of bones of the hinder part of the sage Dadhichi to cut the wings of the mountains. That 'Karanka'(pile of bones) had fallen in Prabhasa, getting smeared on the sandy bank. Visnu ordered Tarksya to throw it in the waters of Mukuta. After taking that 'Karanka' of the sage Dadhici, he (Taraksha) came and reached in the vicinity of "Lahara" (the waves of Ganga). There he saw a heap of snakes and ate that (these snakes) in abundance. On seeing that destruction of snakes, Lord Siva himself interdicted Garuda to stop again and again. Then 'Garutman' also spoke to that Lord Siva, "As far as your vision goes (you see), let there be no snakes, otherwise, I will annihilate them without any hesitation. Told by the Lord as such, he again killed the snakes. Then Lord Siva himself ordered the 'Ganas' (Siva's attendants), O Pramathas (demons)! My attendants! Drive away 'Svaparna' (son of Suparna, the Garuda). Being forbidden by Ganas, that 'Garutman" then went to his abode, leaving" Karanka" immediately from the surface of the sky. As 'Karanka' was abandoned by Garud, so the

'Karanka Gram' became famous in the three worlds (heaven, earth and the region under the earth). Thus the famous place called 'Karanka' came into existence.

By bathing and drinking therein, one is absolved of Brahma - hatya (killing of a Brahmana - a great sin). Undoubtedly, one must take bath in the holy 'Tirtha' (sacred place) named Karanka. O beautiful one! By consecrating the bones with water and performing the Sharadha according to the rites, the journey becomes successful.

O Maheswari! By taking bath, drinking, eating and performing Sharadha in the holy water of Karanka, one is absolved of drinking 'Apeya' (unholy liquors). One who goes from the other side by transgressing over 'Karanka Mahaksetra' goes to the terrible hell and his journey bears no fruit. So one must go to Karanka Ksetra Tirtha, with perseverance. By coming upon (touching) and bathing in the water there, one is absolved of the lesser sins (also). The ancestors attain gratification with the offerings of Karanka water, So the libations of water for the satiety of the deceased manes must be offered there with whole effort in the pure waters of Karanka. The ancestors from the heaven having recourse to Karanka water, always clap, dance, sing songs all over, "If some one in our family (race) born on the earth goes to 'Karanka ksetra' (then he) should offer libations of water to us who have gathered here."

O Mahadevi! The ancestors in the eternal heaven always sing these songs especially. Thus, everything is narrated about the holy Karanka ksetra. Now listen to about the town named Satrueha.

The third chapter named the Mahatmya (religious greatness) of Karanka river in Srisamhita ends.

Sri Bhairava. Listen, I will tell about the one (place) known as 'Satrueha', the remover of the fear of sins, by listening to about which, the obstacles do not arise. Formerly, Vinayaka and Karttikeya had vied with Parsurama. Then Rama had made a joke of them. That Bhargava had also excelled them due to superior alacrity (swiftness).

O Surasundari! Ganesha (then) ordered the obstacles that they should destroy the weapons of Rama. "These obstacles which are produced by me today having become the enemies of Rama should create obstruction with the weapons." Thus they had become the enemies of Rama in striking the target (and) while creating the obstacles, O Mahadevi! They reside in Satrueha. Rama stood thinking for a long, "who are creating interruptions for me." O Devesi! After informing the Lord, he called 'Sabdapatin mantra' (a spell that strikes the sound) according to the particular manner in the battle. Thereafter, O Maheswari! With that 'Astra' (missile) Bhargava, according to the commandment, (arrangement) overturned the obstacles, present in Satrueha.

O Maheswari! The place where the great obstacles had stayed after having become the enemies and were overturned by Rama with the 'Sabdapatin arrow', therefore, O Dear! became the famous town known as Satrueha. O Mahesani! Invocation, sacrificial offering, penance and even svadhyaya (study of Vedas) performed at Satrueha becomes even reaches eternity. It is absolutely true as is told by me. O eternal

Maheswari! The obstructions do not materialize here in Satrugheda. O dear! after seeing the beautiful town named Satrugheda, multitudes of sins vanish and certainly the merit grows.

O One adored by great Gods! An accomplished one who bathes in the holy water in Satrugheda, offering oblations to the ancestors and worshipping the All pervading, attains intimate union with Iswara (the Lord). (His) The ancestors attain gratification and the journey becomes fruitful of the one who even goes to Satrugheda and performs the 'Sharadha' (a ceremony performed in the honour of the departed spirits). After reaching Satrugheda, one who worships Visnu, attains union with Visnu, having reached where one does not grieve. One, who having reached Satrugheda, walks around in the town, his mantras (spells) become effective (supernaturally powerful) and he perceives the God. From Satrugheda, O Iswari (Goddess)! one should proceed further to Ramaradhana, by going where and praying one attains supreme status, O Devi! I have told you about the town "Satrugheda" and also O Iswari (the lordess) about the most sanctifying "Karanka Tirtha" by listening to and reading which one achieves the merit of bathing in Ganga.

Fourth chapter named the 'Mahatmya (glory) of Satrugheda' from the compilation of sacred places connected with the topic of Lahara (waves) in Sri Samhita ends .

Bhairavi: O Mahadeva! Kindly tell me about 'Ramaradhanaka' town.. How the Lord of Lords Mahesana was propitiated by Rama and O Parameswara! How the sacred place had originated.

Sri Bhairava. O Devi! Listen, I will tell how the destroyer of great afflictions, Mahadeva Bhairava along with Goddess (Kati) was propitiated by Rama, Here only was performed a very rigorous penance by the great sage Rama who was keen to learn the weaponry.

O beautiful one! Having abstained from food, he propitiated Mahakala along with Kali, well, for twelve years. When the great sage had been present in that state (of practising penance), Mahakala along with Kali came to the vision of that sage. Seeing the great Lord, God Mahakala with Kali as his part (along with Kali), O One adored by Gods! Bhargava fell prostrate on the earth. After getting up he fell again. O beautiful one! Bhargava after getting up again spoke to Bhairava (the formidable one) with speech faltering with joy, "I propitiate inexhaustible (boundless) Mahakala, radiant like Kalagni (destructive fire at the end of the world), having four arms, resourced to by Kalika (Durga), with hands possessing Kapala (skull), Khatwanga (club with a skull on the top) and denoting the blessing of fearlessness. Om, Obeissance to one of Supreme Form, Most Sublime Truth of Caturvarga (the group of four ends of human life), one who has curbed Maya, Bhairava, one wearing matted hair (Kapardin).

Obeissance to the Supreme Form of sublime stainless nature, who has attained the form due to obligation, the Real Principle, Salutations to you! Om Salutations to Sambhu, the Supreme Lord, knower of the nature of absolute, Supreme Lord of curbed Maya, possessed of variegated knowledge. Salutations to the Lord of three worlds, gross or subtle and of

unmanifest form. Salutations to the Ultimate, Foremost Form, Supreme Sambhu Om. Salutations to you having Kalika as your part, looking like black unguent (Kalanjan Nibhaya), Destroyer of the world. Salutations to you O Mahakala! Salutations to you Lord who is formidable, terrific, fierce(frightening) and the remover of the great fear, the Creator (and) the Destroyer. Salutations to One who is in the form of Supreme Bliss, Great, in the form of Supreme Light, one who is the illuminator of lights Om. Salutations to the One accessible by meditation, dweller in the lotus-heart of Yogins, comprehensible by the meaning of the Vedas and Tantras, perceives of the meaning of Vedas and Tantras, Salutations to Sambhu who exhilarates (delights) those who reflect on Vedas and Agamas (scriptures/ sastras), to be discovered (made known) by Vedas and Tantras and the All pervading. Salutations to the Lord who is the Supreme Light and the One who directs that great and foremost light which inspires the intellect.

Salutations to You who possess the three properties (Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas), Supreme of the three (Brahma, Visnu and Mahesa), possessed of all the three powers (to create, to protect and to annihilate), One in the form of three lights, the three-eyed One, united Form of the Three, imperceptible by speech, the Infinite Lord, one in the form of consciousness. O Maheswara! I am not ashamed of (while) propitiating you with devotion again and again as when in describing whose glory (when whose glory is being described), O Lord! The speech of Brahma etc., is also blunted there (then) what can be said there about my description."

After eulogising Mahesana and falling prostrate on the feet again and again, that Bhargava got up and bowed down. O Maheswari! After listening to the eulogy of Bhargava, Mahakala, while consoling Rama profusely, spoke with beautiful words, "Excellent! O Bhargava! I am extremely pleased with your great devotion and repose (pacification of hunger and thirst), also with self-restraint and penance and eulogy. One who being possessed of self-restraint reads this eulogy constantly everyday, attains the great merit which arises from the sacrifices such as 'Aswamedha' (horse sacrifice) etc. A 'Sadhaka' man (an accomplished person/ devotee) who reads this incantation attains 'Siddhi' (fulfilment of the supernatural faculty). With roaming around in the town one attains the merit of the profound learning of the Vedas. A pious man after reading this eulogy with contemplation (mind fixed upon), undoubtedly attains all that what so-ever he wishes in mind.

This incantation fulfils the desire of the desirous and liberates those who are free from desires. What more is to be said here? One who reads or even listens to this preeminently the best (very best) incantation, undoubtedly attains the Supreme knowledge (Siva-jnana/knowledge of Siva). After giving the blessing for this eulogy, the Lord spoke these words, "You ask a boon from me, though it may be difficult to attain even for 'Kumara' (Karttiveka), O Brahmana Sage! I will undoubtedly bestow that. O Devi! After listening to these words, Bhargava Rama, the best of the men, humble with devotion, spoke to that Mahadeva with folded hands, "what

boon can be greater than that when the Lord Mahakala, who is inconceivable to even Yogins has become the subject of my sight (has come to my vision). Then too, O Lord! I ask for the best precepts of weapons complete in every part and detail (Sangapanga), O Mahakala! So that I become the foremost knower (scholar) of the weapons. Hearing the words of that great sage Bhargava, the Lord becoming pleased spoke these words again with extreme delight, "O sinless one! You learn the Astra (missiles) of the Lord along with their secrets (mystic spells) here only on this beautiful mountain, strong enough to bear such burden. As it (this mountain) carrying the burden of weapons and also that of your brilliance (prowess) so the mountain is called by the name Bharata (Bharam tarati - one which carries the burden) by those acquainted with the past.

As it diffuses the weight of the weapon., and the prowess of Bhargava, so this supreme mountain will be famous as Bharata (Bharam tanoti). O Brahmanasage Bhargava! You learn the missiles in detail along with kumara and also Ganesa. You will become dearer to me than Kumara and Ganesa. This 'Ramaradhanaka Tirtha" is very sanctifying, where, a Brahmana who performs bath, meditation, sacrificial offerings and the study of the Vedas (svadhyaya) as enjoined, attains supreme status.

Bhairava thus, after giving the blessing to the great Bhargava, O Mahesani! Mahakala disappeared within there only. From then onwards, worshipping the Lord of all beings again and again there only, Bhargava learnt the great weapons with their mystic spells. Since then, O Devi! Ramaradhanaka has become very sanctifying for the degraded and also of the great sinners. By seeing Ramaradhanaka Tirtha (the sacred place where Rama propitiated Mahakala) one is freed from the distress (afflictions). One is totally freed from the sins of other births by also taking a bath here. One who visits (sees) 'Ramaradhanaka Tirtha" but does not take bath, O one adored by the Gods! his bath in Ganga becomes futile. As 'Ramaradhanaka Tirtha" is very auspicious, so a person should take the bath here with great effort (care/devotion) and attain salvation. Thus, O Devi! The great 'Ramaradhanaka Tirtha' has been told to you, by listening to which one is absolved of crores of great sins, A person attains salvation, I swear this by truth.

The fifth chapter named the 'description of Ramaradhanaka and Bharata Giri" in the compilation of sacred places connected with the subject of 'waves' in Sri Samhita ends.

Om Sri Bhairavi. O Mahadeva! I am obliged, I am obliged having listened to again and again about the great' Ramaradhanaka" and also O great Lord! about the sacred place, the excellent mountain Bharata. Now, I wish to listen to O Lord! about 'Drsadksetra" and also O Iswara! about 'Mahisi Marga" and the great 'Brahma Sara'. O Lord! O Shiva! Please tell me about' Hansadwara'also.

Bhairava: I will tell, listen O Beautiful One! About Drsadksetra which is very glorious (and) by whose darsana (visit/sight) one attains (the merit

of) 'Gangasnana' (bath in Ganga). Day by day when the great Bhargava had been practising the weapons then a strife arose with Ganesha. O Devesi! There arose a contention in archery with Kumara while striking profusely the arrows of the one thus disputing and abusing Karttikeya and also Ganesha. When Bhrgu and Ganesha were disputing intensely like that, Siva and Siva smiled mutually due to the great thrill. Lord Siva asked Bhargava, Ganesha and also Kumara, "strike the mountain severely" And after listening to those words (of Shiva), Kumara struck that (mountain). The glorious arrow stopped after hitting half of the mountain, After seeing half of the mountain pierced, Shiva (then) spoke to Bhargava, "O Brahman Sage! Display your weapon. Strike the elevated mountain."

O Dear! after listening to these words of that Lord of the Lords, O, One adored by the gods! Bhargava immediately struck the peak of the mountain and pierced the mountain peak with the arrow. O Maheswari! O Dear! Bhargava was happy after splitting (tearing) that peak. While rubbing that illustrious arrow, Rama then spoke the words, "I will rub (shave) off the beard of both of you with the arrows on drsad as attrition (rivaley) of arrows has been done here. Because of the tearing off the beard by Bhargava, 'Drsad Ksetra' was formerly known by the name 'Napita' (barber). One attains the merit of 'Vajapeya' sacrifice even by the darsana (visit) of Drsad. One, who performs the 'darsana' of 'Drsad Ksetra' on the auspicious clear day break (morning), attains supreme status. The Supreme Lord was surprised and (also) very pleased on seeing this feat of that great Bhargava and laughed. Seeing that (him) Mahadeva laughing, the goddess was enraged. (Then) Girija spoke to Hara brilliantly with harsh words, "O All Prevading one! Move to the cemetery. What concern do you have with domestic (household) affairs as you teach him (Rama) the best (or teach the other one) and not your sons. Be coming pleased (as such) and laughing on seeing your stupefied (unintelligent) sons, you are not ashamed of, O Sambhu! You do as you wish, O Shiva! You may go or stay." Listening to these words of the goddess, Siva, after attaining the extremely fierceful form, O, Mahesani! disappeared within. Being tormented thus on not seeing Mahadeva, Devi (the goddess) became remorseful. Thus becoming distressed, she went away by that path downfaced like a female buffalo (Mahisavat). As the goddess was headlong on that path, so, O beautiful one! It was called the glorious 'Mahisi Marga' by the ancients. O beautiful one! One who goes to the renowned 'Brahma Sara' by Mahisi Marga, attains the fruit of Asvamedha' (horse sacrifice) on each step. And O Maheswari! The journey of Ganga becomes twice or thrice as much (fruitful) one must take ablution with effort (devotion or care) in the holy 'Brahmasarovara', which is on the foot (region) of that Goddess of gods, who was going thus distressed. After seeing the 'Brahma Sara' there, the Mother of the world asked, "Have you not seen the Lord of Lords, the great Sambhu' Brahma sara 'on listening (to those words of the goddess) spoke, "O Goddess of the Gods, I have not seen the Supreme Sambhu".

After listening to those lying (untrue) words of 'Brahma Sara" Ambika (the mother) then herself went with great pain in that Hansadwara

'Jagadambika' (the mother of the world) than wept shedding great tears. Then, with those tears arrisen out of grief, came up there the divine 'Asrusarovara' (lake of tears), the destroyer of great sins. From there, she went to the lofty peak named 'Haramukha' (the countenance, face, of Shiva) and O One adored by the Gods! saw the Lord of Lords there only. On seeing Shiva, she with body encompassed with joy, the radiance (gleam) of the face expanded, embraced Hara with heart filled with delight. O Maheswari! Then she came along with Hara, shedding the tears again with heart filled with happiness. That became O Devi! The second lake which was very cooling. Then the Goddess of the Gods cursed that great holy Brahma Sara, that great lake should become shattered because of having said a lie. Since then, O Devest! The lake has withered away. The Lord on seeing the lake (thus) cursed there, said, "O Sarovar (lake)! You stay here purifying the degraded ones yourself for long. As long as the bath and Sharadha (ceremony in the honour of the deceased ancestors) are not performed in this excellent water and also the consecration of bones till then is no Gangajala (water of Ganga is not acceswsible). As long as the Sharadha is not done in this collection of water, till then journey is unfruitful, there is no doubt in this. So, you stay as long as Ganga stays here, purifying the fallen out (degraded) beings and also the great sinners, Then after giving that boon (to the shattered Brahma Sarovara) Sambhu disappeared within. So, O Devi! One should take bath in Brahma Sarovara with effort (care/devotion). What is the use of saying more, by taking bath in the 'Brahma Sarovara', O Devi! One is immediately freed from the sins of crores of births, a person attains the merit born out of Vajapeya (sacrifices) and the like. Why a bewildered man makes an effort in roaming around the town. One should go for walking around the town after taking the bath in the water of 'Brahma Sara'.

O Devi! You have been told about the glorious Drsad Ksetra and also Mahisi Marga, O Isi (the Goddess)! and the supreme BrahmaSara, by reading and listening to which one is relieved of the sins like Brahmahatya (killing of a Brahmana).

The sixth chapter named 'the description of BrahmaSara, Mahisi Marga and Drsad Ksetra' in the compilation of Tirthas (sacred places) connected with the topic of waves ends.

Sri Bhairavi, O Mahadeva! I have recollected the holy 'Brahma Sarovar'. I am fortunate today, I am undoubtedly grateful. I now wish to hear about the holy Tirtha (sacred place) arisen from the tears and the glory of Hansadwara in 'Kaula Sarovara'. O Sambhu! Please tell me also about 'Nandi Ksetra'.

Sri Bhairava Listen, O Mahadevi! I will tell the glory of 'Asruksetra' and of holy Hansadwara, after hearing to which one is freed from the difficulty/distress/adversity). The split (cleave) which was created by Rama on the peak of the mountain, that only became the door for swans and ascetics, that became the approach to see the Utaramanasa. 'Suddha Paramahansatva' (unstained spiritualism/spiritual character) manifests in those, who are engaged in the pilgrimage and go through that very door.

By going through the other path, Hansatva (supreme felicity) does not occur (happen). As it produces the knowledge, "I am that only" and grants salvation (and) as it destroys the ignorance, O Devil! so it is called 'Hansa'. As it attains the feeling of non-duality of spiritual beings, O, one with beautiful complexion! So it is called Hansadwara by the people acquainted with the past. It is called the door to salvation. It is the great door to heaven, O Devil! It is the Brahmadwara (door to Supreme reality). It is glorious Sivadwara. It is called the Brahmadwara, the great door for the goddesses and Sri Visnu by the learned. So a wise man must go to Hansadwara with all effort. He attains salvation O Deves! There should be no doubt (pondering). He who enters Hansadwara does not enter the womb. A man who goes to the door of Hansas, O, One adorned by Gods! attains the state of spiritual persons (persons with supernatural faculties), I have no doubt here. Those who perform darsana (visit to see) attain that state which is attained by highly distinguished saints and who are the perpetual conquerors of duality. Even the persons devoid of attachment, free from self-conceit (egotism) and Yogis who have conquered the breath do not attain that state to which go the persons performing darsana (the visit). Saints, munificents (engaged in charity), Sadhakas (the performers of rituals/ devotees/ Yogis) and ascetics even do not attain that supernatural power which those who perform 'darsana' attain, Those who perform 'darsana' do not attain the misery of dwelling in the womb, transmigration and death. What is the use of saying more in this Kali age (Kali yuga), terrible with impurities (sins). A man attains salvation by resorting to Hansadwara on seeing Kali Yuga present near by and getting into it, so one should move to Hansadwara leaving aside everything.

That sadhaka (performer of a ritual devote/yogin). O Mahesani! Who is engaged in 'purascarya' (undertaking a walk in the town) and does not see ones own desired deity (ista devata) should go to Hansadwara. Whatever is performed by overtaking Hansadwara by the men, all that goes waste. Here no pondering (reflection) is to be done. So a man must enter the Hansadwara with whole effort. He attains all success, it is true. O One with beautiful face! What is the use of saying more again and again O Maheswari! A man attains fulfilment (supernatural power) after going to Hansadwara. This Hansadwara is said to be the reliever of the sins of the sinners, bestower of the knowledge to the pure, O Devi! and grants salvation to those desirous of salvation. This great door is the opener of the plank of Sivadwara (the door to reach Siva).

O Devi! The merit arising from the Hansadwara has been told to you. A person is emancipated from crores of sins by listening to about it. Now, O Devi! Listen to the great merit arising from Asm (Assurj Tirtha) by listening to which a creature is absolved of the sins of crores of births. O Maheswari! One who takes bath in the water have arisen out of grief and came out from the eyes of the Goddess does not get into the miseries of the world. The poverty is misery (pain), death is misery (pain) and the disease is misery (pain). O Iswari! One who takes bath daily in the water of tears of Girija, born out of distress (affliction/pain) he never gets misery (pain). Therefore, one must go the water arisen from the eyes with whole

effort (full devotion). He attains total Siddhi (complete sanctification/total perfection). There is no doubt about it. O Maheswari! By resorting to the water of joy which came forth from the eyes of the Great Goddess, a man attains extremely great joy. By taking bath in the cool, holy blissful water arisen out of joy, one attains emancipation. I have no doubt here. One who takes bath in the water of Ganga by ignoring /disregarding these two lakes becomes offensive of the Tirthas (sacred place) and his pilgrimage is fruitless. Therefore, after taking bath in these two lakes, one should go to the divine 'Kaula Sara' the great bestower of 'Siddhis'" (supernatural powers) for the Kaulas (persons of a noble tribe), O Devesi! After resorting to which, the Kaulas had attained supreme felicity. In this extremely terrible 'Kali age' Kaulas are definitely the followers of 'Dharma' (the righteousness). Here, if someone performs bath charity, penance, fast and also the 'svadhyaya' (study of Vedas), then he becomes worthy of Final Beatitude, O Girija! What is the use of saying much again. He, who bathes in the water having come forth out of grief and also in the water arisen out of joy and in the splendid Kaula Sara (for him) there is no grief, no fear, no illness, no slavery; O Dear! no effeminacy (femininess) and not even Kalabhangha (interruption in time) a person gets ever. Thus the merit arising out of the pilgrimage has been revealed by me to you; the great reward has been told. What else you wish to listen to.

The seventh chapter named the glory of Hansadwara and Asruksetra' in the compilation of sacred places connected with the topic of waves ends.

Om Sri Bhairavi spoke Mahadeva! Kindly tell me now, why it is called 'Kaula Sara' and also O Devesi! the glory which destroys all sins and fears.

Sri Bhairava: Listen to about the divine Kaula Sara (lake) on that great holy mountain, O Devi! By listening to which a sadhaka (a performer of the ritual / an accomplished person/ a devotee) attains perfection of the 'mantras" (the mystic spells). The great sage Bhargava , distressed having killed the mother, performed a very rigorous penance on this holy, great mountain. Being self restrained, not taking food, consuming air and with subdued senses, he became engaged in the worship of Kali. O Beautiful one amongst the gods! A very long time passed of the great Bhargava absorbed in propitiating Shyama (Kali). As such, when that great sage was practising the severe penance with the desire for the glimpse of Kali, one hundred divine years passed. On not seeing her, O Mahadevi! Rama grieved extremely. When that Bhargava was thus lamenting and (also) practising the penance continuously, a divine voice uttered, "resort to purascarana (undertake a walk in and around the town). You will achieve the 'Mantrasiddhi' (efficacy of the mystic spells). O Bhargava! How can a spell there be effective for him who has not performed 'Purascarana' (walk in the town). One who performs 'Purascarana' with the 'Mantra'(spell) attains fulfilment (efficacy) for that. And any Sadhaka (performer of a ritual) on the earth who does not roam about in the town, attains no siddhi (efficacy for the spell) even by lakhs of years.

So, O Rama! Perform Purascarya everyday with devotion. You will, no doubt, attain the glimpse of Kali. After saying this, O Beautiful One! The voice of the messenger of the God stopped.

After listening to the words of the Devadhuta (the messenger of the god), the son of Bhrgu then observed the great Purascarana in a proper manner, O Haheswari! When Bhargava was thus meditating, Kali along with Mahakala came to his sight. Then again , he saw chaste Kali having a terrible mouth, hair and ornaments scattered, holding noose and a club with a skull at the top, wearing the ornament in the form of the garland of skulls of men, (looking) vehement with skull and 'damaru' (a sort of small drum).

Then, after seeing her, Rama, being highly concentrated in thoughts, propitiated the Lordess of the three worlds with thousands of divine names with devotion. The great Goddess became pleased with the incantation of Bhargava. She spoke to Bhargava, the son of Jamdagni with fine speech, "I will atone you of alone the sin of Matrhatya (the sin of killing the mother) O Bhargava! I will tie the sin(her) with noose. O best of the Brahmans! I am pleased with your incantation. After saying this, she of the black form, tied Matrhatya (the sin of killing the mother) which had come out from his body and killed her vehemently with the club. Kali spoke to him again, "O Sage! You have become lean due to penance. Take the nectar which is offered to you by me here after becoming pleased. After saying this, Shyama (Kali) then struck the earth with the club. There sprang up the 'Kaula Sara', the life of the followers of kuladharma (the observers of the duties of kula tribe(family)). The place from where the nectar, hidden in the earth was taken out by Kali with the club, was so called the holy 'Kaula Sarovara' by the persons acquainted with the past. Therefore, one should go to 'Kaula Sara" with whole effort (care/devotion). O Devesi! One strips off 'Brahmhatya' (the sin of killing a Brahman) by resorting to it. O Girija! Rama (then) plunged in the water that had come forth in the Kaula Sara (and) which is the bestower of merit in Kali (yuga/age) and drank the excellent nectar. Since then, O Dear! Rama obtained longevity . Shyama (Kali) also disappeared within (became invisible) after thus giving the boon . Then Rama also went there again near Bhutesa (the Lord of all beings). A man, whosoever, resorts to 'purascarana' in 'Kaula Sara' attains the reward of the thorough knowledge of the Vedas, hundred times more of Haradwara and thousand times of the stay in Kasi. He attains the merit two times more (as much) by taking bath in Kaula Sara. A man attains the same merit by taking bath in Kaula Sarovara which accrues due to the proper gifting of thousand of crores of cows to a Brahmana, well-versed in the Vedas, in Kurukshetra on the (day of) eclipse of the sun. May one be unlearned or the learned, devoid of desires or full of them, one attains the 'siddhi' (supernatural faculty) after taking a bath there. I have no doubt about that. One who goes to Ganga, the Goddess of the three worlds, by overtaking 'Kaula',O Bhuvaneswari! he attains the 'darsana' of Ganga in vain. There is no sacred place equal to Kaula on the earth, heaven and in the sky. In Kali (yuga) the pilgrimage of Ganga is very rewarding and bestows the 'siddhi' (efficacy) of the 'mantras' (mystic spells). Thus all is

said about extremely holy, divine 'Tirtha' (sacred place) named 'Kaula Sara', the destroyer of all sins and fears.

Eighth chapter named the 'glory of Kaulasara" in the compilation of sacred places connected with the topic of waves ends.

Sri Bhairava: Om O Devi! Now listen to the great Nandiksetra and there of the great lake Mahakala , O Isani! Which wards off the Brahmahatya, the sin of killing a Brahmana. O Maheswari! When Mahakala had concealed (himself) from the Goddess, then the Lord of the Lords himself ordered the attendant, 'O Nandin! No one should see me here, Be attentive on the door. Let no body enter here. "So will it be" saying thus, O Dear! Nandi, then, became attentive, in guarding the door on that 'Haramukha" mountain.

Thereafter, the unblemished Goddess, searching for the Lord, came here. Seeing Girija (the daughter of the mountain) having come there to search for the Lord, Nandi, Having become seized with the doubt, put in for long. Then, O Dear! after pondering variously whether (or not) I obstruct the Lordess of gods or say the Lordess of the world, Nandi came to the conclusion that the Lordess of the gods Mahesani should not be prohibited here, for the holy Brahma Sara has (already) been cursed by the Goddess of the gods. So let the Goddess, desirous of seeing Hara climb the mountain, saying (to himself) thus (and) bowing down to the Lordess of the God of gods, the attendant Nandikeswara, then himself spoke politely, "The Goddess of the gods Maheswari may herself climb the mountain and the Lordess, for herself, see the face of Hara, here on the mountain. The Goddess became pleased after hearing the words of Nandi and conferred on him the blessing : "Son! Be long lived." After saying thus (and) then seeing the face of Hara after climbing the mountain, Sati having become filled with astonishment exulted again and again. Unfatigued she embraced Hara there again and again (repeatedly). On seeing Sati, having come like that, Hara became astonished. The angry God of gods, Siva (Ursakapi) spoke to Nandi. "As you yourself by becoming benumbed (inanimate) have transgressed my orders, so you will stay in the benumbed form on this holy mountain".

After hearing these words of the Lord and becoming the lake, O Maheswari! that very Nandiksetra (region of Nandi) became famous in the three worlds, Due to the anger, the Lord had become of black colour on that 'Haramukha' mountain (and) Nandi was cursed by that great God due to anger. Seeing Nandi cursed like that, the Lordess of the world, Girija, striking with angry looks spoke to Siva, " As innocent Nandi has been cursed by you, so O Devesa! You will also undoubtedly stay in Mahakala Sarovara after becoming a lake in the Nandiksetra". After saying this, the Lordess of the earth, being full of anger went away. Hara prevented her , who was thus going away and derided himself,

O Maheswari! My anger itself, in the form of Kala, after becoming the lake and resorting to half of the Nandiksetra, be there on the earth for long.

So O Maheswari! You also stay here along with me. After saying this, the Lord of lords and Siva also disappeared within. Since then, Nandiksetra is possessed of great merit and Mahakalasara also became famous on the earth. The reward which a mortal attains by giving crores of brown cows to a Brahmana conversant in the Vedas, in a proper manner in Prayaga, Naimisaranya and also in the wild Kuru region, O Devi! that he attains by bathing here. The merit (fruit) which one may attain from living in Kasi for one Kalpa (100 yugas) that merit is received by the mortal (here) from one day's bath. O Maheswari! what is the use of saying again and again and prattling. As aweful Kali has arrived, one must seek refuge to Nandiksetra. A sacred place like Nandiksetra has neither been there nor will there be. O Devi! thus the merit arising from the Nandiksetra and also O Isani! that of Mahakala, which destroys great sins, has been told by me.

Ninth chapter named the description of Nandiksetra and Mahakala Sarovara in the compilation of the sacred places connected with the topic of waves in the conversation of Bhairava and Bharavi in the Sri Samhita ends.

Om Sri Bhairavi I have been bought; I am obliged I have been released / liberated, from the ocean of the world (worldly existence/mundane life). I am plunged in bliss by listening to the merit arising from the sacred places.

O Mahadeva! Tell me again the supreme glory of Ganga as I am not satiated (content) even after listening to that like a man after drinking the nectar.

Sri Bhairava: Listen, O Mahesani! I will tell the great glory of Ganga after listening to which, one is emancipated and attains the reward of Gangasana (a bath in Ganga). The fruit which one attains after practising celebacy for hundred Kalpas (one Kalpa is equal to 1000 Yugas), O Dear! that fruit a mortal attains from the bath in Ganga . O Lordess! The merit which one receives from the rigorous penance (such as Prajapatya etc.) Candrayana penance (observed) with very little (or no) water and many dutifully performed holy deeds, that is attained from a day's bath in Mukuta Ganga on the eighth day of the Bhadra month.

The fruit which a man attains in Haradwara, Kusavarta, Naimisaranya, Prabhava and also in Puskara, that he attains by taking a plunge in Ganga which originated from the crown (of Siva); O Girija! he attains that virtue. The sacred places which are there on the earth, they are in the province of Kasmira and the sacred places which are in Kasmira, they are on the Haramukha mountain. Therefore, one must see (visit) Haramukha with full effort (devotion). By seeing (visiting) Haramukha, O Goddess! one attains the reward (merit) which arises from the sacrifices. The virtue and the reward which arises after hearing the Vedas and Puranas in a proper manner, that, one receives by seeing Haramukha. The fruit which one attains by (performing) Asvamedha, Vajapeya and Jyotistoma sacrifices, that fruit. O Dear! one attains by seeing (visiting)

Haramukha. One who is connected with great sins or with the lesser sins is freed from all of them by taking a bath in Mukuta Ganga, O Hahadevi! In Kali Yuga (age), that great sinner whose bones, one , after placing them on the lotus leaf, then keeping them in a copper box and filling (that) with black and white sesame seeds, O Devi! and also with mustard seeds, then consecrates them with five 'gavyas' (things obtained from the cow such as milk, curd, etc.,). O Maheswari! then covering with various linen clothes and O Dear! also consecrates with, Vedic and Tantrika prayers and thus after covering, lays (throws them) in the water of Ganga on the eighth day of Bhadra, he is immediately rescued from the hell along with seven persons.

O Mahesani! one, whose bones are immersed in the water of Ganga , (he) breaks open the panel of the door of heaven.

O Maheswari! one who commits incest with his mother, sister, even with the wife of the brother and also the sister of father, sister of mother, even also with the wife of the teacher is immediately relieved of the sin after taking bath in Mukuta Ganga. A robber of gold, a drunkard, one longing for women, even the killer of the wife , killer of cow and the ungrateful also, O Isani (Lordess)! is immediately absolved of the sin. For those men, for whom atonement is not seen in the whole lot of scriptures, for them, it is seen by me here in the water of Haramukha in (the month of) Bhadra. O Lordess of the world! The time in Mukuta Ganga during rains on the bright eighth day of Bhadra (month) is said to be auspicious and the bestower of good luck. When that time arrives, then one should resort to Mukuta. No day, no planet either adverse or suitable (odd or even) is said to create obstacles in Ganga, O Devesi! when the (right) time arrives, then one should resort to the holy water which had come forth from the crown. O Lordess of the world! The Tirthas (sacred places) become defiled when they are united with the great sinners. They, undoubtedly come to take bath in the pure water in Mukuta Ganga on the eighth day of (the month of) Bhadra.

So, O Dear! knowing Kali (period) as horrible or the death on the head (imminent), one should immediately move to Haramukha with whole effort (full devotion), where O Devesi! due to the influence of Mahakala, there is no time, not even the breach of time and neither even the hell, O Beautiful One! O Lordess! There is no fear of transmigration or even the death. There is no fear of planets even, no fear arising from the famine. There is no fear even from calamities after taking bath in Mukuta Ganga. O Mahadevi! There is no better Tirtha (sacred place) than this, no better merit than this, no charity, no fast, no holy deed, no severe and glorious penance equal to Mukuta Ganga. O Mahadevi! Neither it has been there nor it will be, it is absolutely true, In the extremely horrible Kali, no sacrificial practices are equal to the bath in the Uttraganga. So one should resort to Ganga which originated from the crown (of Siva) with full effort (devotion). His crores of hells disappear (vanish away) from its 'darsana' (visit). O Dear! One is freed from three debts Rrsirna, Devarna and Pitrrna) by going to Mukuta Ganga and by bathing and offering oblations to gods and deceased ancestors with devotion, the ancestors of whom present in the sphere of manes sing profusely that if he takes bath in our race due to

good luck he must throw the bones in Uttraganga with care (devotion) or he offers oblations or performs Sharadha in proper manner or may feed the Brahmanas with devotion on the holy, glorious bank of Ganga.

O Maheswari! The deceased ancestors sing verses on seeing the one born in their lineage setting off, O Dear! towards Haramukha mountain. The ancestors clap, dance, exhilarate with delight. What is the use of talking more again and again. In Kali (yuga) a sinner is absolved of all the sins by bathing in Mukuta Ganga. This great secret should not be told to the one who reproaches Vedas and is engaged in despising the sacred places and also intent on blaming the teacher. A man who listens to or even reads (about Mukuta Ganga) attains the fruit of the bath in Ganga .

Sri Bhairavi, a man engaged in the pilgrimage should move by which path in an order after performing the holy glorious bath etc., in Mukuta Ganga,Sri Bhairava. From Mahakala waters, Nandi ksetra and Uttaramanasa, one must go after offering oblations to the garden of Bhima, on seeing (visiting) which a man is relieved from the sins of various births.

Sri Bhairavi , O Mahadeva! Tell (me) about the garden of Bhimasena . Why this beautiful garden was created by Bhimasena?

Sri Bhairava . Listen, O Beautiful One! I will tell (you) about the garden of Bhimasena. Formerly, O Dear! Nandi, Bhringrita, Bhimasena after taking water for a bath and also various flowers etc. and also O Great Goddess! taking Arghya, (offering in the form of honey, curd etc.) and fragrant incense etc., performed the worship of the image of Linga'O Dear! by day and night. O Beautiful one! Then there the mighty Bhimasena was ordered by them,, "O King! Create a garden for the Lord. O King! You do us an extremely astonishing favour. Then something will happen here in the proximity of Sankara. After listening to their words, O Great Goddess! and taking the plough from Rama, he created this beautiful garden, a pious and excellent ground splendid with beautiful (auspicious) fruits for the worship of the Lord and also for the 'Naivedya" (offerings of eatables to the deity). Since then.. O Devesi! There the holy, beautiful garden of Bhimasena has become renowned. By even going there and performing the "darsana" (viewing / seeing) and "sparsana" (touching) of the deity and also doing the "sparsana" (touching) of the ground, the sins get away from the distance, One who is endowed with pure soul becomes virtuous, sinless, free of bonds, freed from 'Brahmahatya', the sin of killing a Brahmana, and he does not attain misery. From there one should proceed towards 'Bodheswara'. For the advancement of the supernatural faculty where an awakening as 'All this is One Supreme Siva'(all this is not different from Siva) arises. On reaching 'Bodheswara Gin' (Bodheswara mountain) in the course of the pilgrimage,O Dear! the prime awakening arises only from the plunge in the sacred lake. It is established in the scriptures that one attains emancipation from the sacred dip in the Tirthas (sacred places).

The sacred practice of bath and charity on the Mukuta Tirtha of Hara is auspicious and that visit to 'Bodheswara' is special from the other sacred places. On the foot of 'Bodheswara Gin' are present thousands of gods,

demons and 'Gandharvas" (demi gods regarded as the singers of gods) who along with seven sages and great serpents here worship me always for the complete attainment of the knowledge of Sivatva (the Supreme Reality). After gratifying Bodheswara, one should move from there very slowly. After that one should take resort to the lotus feet of Narayana. There, after performing the bath, worship and the eulogy, a worthy Brahmana should abandon the club and the slippers after consecrating them with the 'mantras" (sacred prayers) for the successful accomplishment of the journey. After listening to the boon, "Attain that every position to which have gone the gods, the lords of the three worlds, thousand times" and after attaining the boon from Narayana, one should move to one's resort. After seeing Bodheswar Giri, one should go to the hermitage of Vasistha. All the sins vanish and the infirmity of the world (mundane life) also disappears; wisdom increases and the speech gets pace (eloquence) from the 'darsana' of the hermitage of Vasistha. Because of the practising of penance by the sage Vasistha, that place from where pace of speech; wisdom and the efficacy of speech arises, is even today famous as 'Vacsiddhi' due to its glory. All that; the bath, charity and the prayers in the vicinity of Vaygatigrama" undoubtedly becomes eternal. The state of supernatural qualities which occurs due to coming out of 'Hansadwara' and also due to alighting from the Bodheswara Giri, the firmness of that for the enlightened results from going to Vaggati also.

In Kali., the descent from 'Bodheswara' and the passing through the 'Hansadwara' grants the path to salvation due to the knowledge of Supreme Siva. After worshipping the hermitage of Vasistha, famous by the name Vaggati, then going to the region of 'Kaksyasara', one should gratify the Lord Ganapati with various eatables and the bites of meat etc. Thereafter propitiating one's own favourite deity (goddess) and thinking of going according to one's desire, one should proceed in the desired manner according to the prescribed method (rites). I have told you about Mukuta Tirtha of Hara, the divine lake of Uttaramanasa, which grants the way to salvation, destroys ignorance, is extremely perennial due to the proximity of goddess Bhagirathi and the destroyer of all the sins in the Kali Yuga. The glory of Ganga is complete .

In the year 1895 A. D. on 5th day of July accordingly on Friday, the 14 th day of bright fortnight of Ashad month of 1952 Vikramaditya samvat at the mountain range of Mohand Marg, from the original manuscript of Haramuktaganga mahatmya of Pandit Sahajabhatta taken down by Pandit Kashi Ram which was edited by comparing it with the original text by Pandit Govind Kaul under the auspicious patronage of Dr Aurel Stein and is reproduced from HLF-KBC Sir Aurel Stein Heritage web-site, project-UK. Principal research investigator, Shri S.N.Pandita.

English rendering is by Dr.Kamlesh Birmani.

APPENDIX V

LEGENDS FROM THE AMARESHWARA MAHATMAYA

THE LEGEND OF MAMLESHWARA

Once Lord Shiva assigning charge of the two gates at Sthalavat, Thajvor, to Ganesha, went ahead of Kilan in the forest of the ascetic named Dandaka. He had hardly cooled his heels when the gods assembled there with all glee. Seeing the gods congregated there he said in an imperative voice exhorting them again and again "Don't, don't, O Gods! Do not come here." Hearing Lord Shiva shouting thus the self-same Ganesha, in quick haste, came running from the lower region of Sthalavat, holding his axe in his hands. He threw the words, 'Ma, Ma' (don't, don't) at the Devas. While Ganesha uttered these words, all the gods got dissolved in that voice. Since, under the influence of Ganesha's prohibitive call, all the gods in a body, got absorbed in the transcendental Shiva, the place was given the name Mamleshwara.

THE LEGEND OF LAMBODARI

Once when Shiva and Parvati were resting in their abode at Kailash, Ganesha, on his own kept guard at the gate. Thereupon, Lord Shiva, in his own right, instructed Ganesha to see that nobody approached there. Even the gods were to be warded off. Shiva was engrossed in sportive conversation with his divine consort, Parvati.

Meanwhile, Indra heckled by Tripura demon, in the company of gods, appeared there, seeking an audience with the Lord Shiva. Indra, the king of gods, was stopped by Ganesha, from going in. Feeling incensed, Indra tried to unleash his missile thunderbolt on Ganesha in return. But Ganesha paralysed Indra's arm with a loud 'hum'. Beholding the valour, the latter fell at former's feet, like a fallen stick and appeased him with reverential obeisance. Ganesha's wrath abated and he cast a kind look upon Indra. He released the arm of Indra and fulfilled his desire. Indra offered obeisance again and left for his own abode.

After the incident, Ganesha felt hungry and thirsty. He took sweet fruit in the forest and drank the entire content of the stream flowing by. His belly got swollen. When Lord Shiva saw this, he beat his belly with his Damru, mini-drum, and gave him towering name Lambodara. This made Ganesha vomit the water, which flowed again in the stream that got the name 'Lambodari', which is now known as the 'Liddar'.

LEGEND OF BHRIGU TIRTHA

In ancient time, a great sage Bhrigu, performed severe penance in the forest called Parishela. The sage remained absorbed in meditation for a considerable period. At last, Lord Vishnu came there to bless him. Bhrigu,

along with all the gods received him and in obeisance worshipped the Lord with great devotion. Lord Vishnu raised Bhrigu, who had fallen at his feet, soaked with tears of joy. The Lord planted a kiss at the crown of the sage. Then Vishnu and Bhrigu fell into each other's arms. The compression thereof caused the most sanctified sweat trickle down their limbs forming a virtue-ploughing hallowed spot in that peerless Parishela forest. On account of the perspiration produced with the embrace of Bhrigu and Vishnu, that spot changed into a spring and earned lasting fame as Bhrigu-kshetra or Bhrigu-Tirtha .

LEGEND OF RENJANA

About one and a half kilometers ahead of Pahalgam, on the Amarnath route, the forest was known as 'Renjana Vana'. Once Sri Rama, Sita and Laksman, wading through the Renjana forest, beheld demons, who were furious and extremely tipsy. Looking at the demons sweat trickled down from their bodies. This formed two pious pools on the sylvan height. The pools are called 'Ram-kund' and 'Sita-kund'.

Sri Rama ascended the huge boulder nearby and from its top aimed at the demons. A large number of the demons were killed. The remaining ran about for shelter to hide them-selves. With spray of blood of the slain demons, the huge boulder, which appears like a small hill, turned red. With the touch of Sri Rama's sacred feet, the quality of making others holy, was transformed to a holy spot. By taking this boulder into account, one gets freed from sins. This boulder got the local name 'Reenza Pal'.

THE LEGEND OF NEEL GANGA

Once while Shiva was sporting with Parvati in privacy, he kissed her eyes, to which collyrium had been applied. This black pigment tainted Shiva's face and mouth. When Parvati saw Shiva's face tainted, she in sport, made him look into the transparent water of the stream flowing nearby. Seeing the black taint on his mouth, stuck like the black shimmer of his matted locks, Shiva at once washed it away with the water of the stream flowing by. The water turned dark-blue and the stream came to be known as Neel Ganga.

THE LEGEND OF STHANU ASHRAM

According to Amareshwara Mahatmaya, Chandanwari is known as Sthanu Ashram. A groove just near this place is known as Chandana-vatika. Once Lord Shiva in separation of his former consort Sati, under took arduous penance on the Sylvan heights of the Himalayas. Sati had suffered dishonour at the place of her father, king Daksha and immolated herself. Sad Shiva retired to inner Himalayas and remained engrossed in meditation.

Parvati, who loved Shiva the most, came there to do penance, meditating upon Shiva. She continued the penance for long in Chandanavatika, but the Lord did not complete his abstract meditation. He was like a pollard, Sathanu. Hence the place got the name Sthanu-vatika.

THE LEGEND OF PISSU MOUNT

Once demons and gods, joined hands, set out to steal a glance over Lord Shiva, who was in meditation, sitting like a pollard, in the vicinity of Sthanu ashram, Chandanwari. They inteded to steal march, over one another. It was a virtual stampede to gain distance from one another. This rivalry culminated in their mutual fight to gain vantage point while going up the mount Pissu. The best among the gods pounded the demons down to tiny bits, forbidding their onward ascent at this point. The gods felt relieved. The mount, where the demons led by their chief, called Prashat, were pounded, came to be known as Pesha Giri. (Pesha, means pound and Giri, means mount) Later Pesha became Pissu and in Kashmiri it is known as 'Pissu Baal'

THE LEGEND OF SHESH NAG

In ancient time, during *Satya Yuga*, gods, sages and celestial beings, accompanied by demi-gods, went to line up on the pious peak of the Himalaya mountain in the vicinity of Amareshwara. This would afford them easy worship, clear glimpse of and meditation on the Lord.

In the meantime, the fierce chief of demons, Prashat by name, appeared in the form of wind. He was very sinew and puffed up with the consummation of his penance. He indulged in teasing gods. His chief weapon was the wind, with which he inflicted misery upon the gods. The gods, along with their chief Indra, sought refuge with the great Lord Amareshwara, Shiva. The Lord manifested himself and addressed the unnerved gods in a sweat voice, "O gods! I have listened to all what you have said about the demon Prashat. But you must also know that it was I who made him grow, by granting him the boon. I am, therefore, loath to see him cut to his size. You approach Lord Vishnu who is staying in the midst of the milky-ocean and relaxing on Shesha, the lord of serpents."

Thereupon, the whole host of gods, repaired to milky-ocean in full glee and highly satisfied. They pleased the Lord with their eulogies. Lord Vishnu allayed their discomfiture in these words, "O Venerable gods! for some time you go to heaven where you will be completely free from affliction. I will do away with that wicked wind-demon along with his tribe." Saying these words Lord Vishnu appeared in cosmic form, wielding divine weapons in his four arms, on the towering mountain, along with his consort Lakshmi and reclining on the Shesha. He exhorted the thousand-hooded Shesha to inhale quickly with his numerous mouths, the wind and feel fully refreshed as snakes live on wind. The numerous headed serpent, in hot

haste, drank up the violent wind in the form of demon in no time. Even then there remained a little trace of wind on the summit of the mountain range. Shesha, therefore, chose a habitat near about, as desired by Lord Vishnu. The gods were relieved of all sorts impediments and the place came to be known as Shesh nag. The ancient name was Sushravas, which later changed to Sushrama, and then to Sheshram. It is now called Shesh Nag.

THE LEGEND OF HATYAR TALAV

During the battle between gods and demons in Pissu Ghati, some demons had escaped and hid themselves in a pool just at a short distance from Wavjen. The pool was full of water. From there they teased the gods and created havoc for them, whenever an opportunity came.

One day Shiva and Parvati, engaged in sport passed this way together. Parvati was filled with compassion for the gods, on seeing them tormented by the demons, hiding in the pool. While she was requesting Shiva, to take pity on the obstructed gods, Shiva's bull uttered a mencing sound 'Hum'. The demons smitten with this bellowing sound hid themselves in the pool. Parvati instantly uttered a curse on the pool, "Let dry spell befall the pool for all times to come and twin offerings to the gods and the manes be of no avail here." Soon after the curse was uttered, that captivating pool dried up and is known as Hatyar Talav, the dry pool.

THE LEGEND OF PANCHATARNI

During primeval days of Shiva's dance, his matted locks, *Kaparda*, got loose and spread in five rushes. The divine Ganga, whom he holds on head, came out and flowed in five branches, which wash away all the sins. The Ganges that flowed in five streams from the locks of Lord Shiva, were termed as Panchatarangini.

THE LEGEND OF DAMRAKA

Shiva, as per routine, dances at dawn and dusk. One day he missed this twilight hour while he had been playing with his son Shanmukha, Kartikeya. When he became conscious of the negligence, he felt worried. Parvati enquired, what the cause of this obsession was, Shiva told her that he skipped over the twilight hour and that omission was giving him unmitigating pain.

It is believed, that demons try to make mortals uncomfortable at dawn and dusk, two junction times, understood to be the hours of concentration. Hence Lord Shiva, beguiles them with his *Tandava*, dance till the twilight time is over. Here the Lord felt sorry for the mortals who must have suffered at the hands of demons, since he had missed undertaking the routine dance to beguile them. That was precisely what had made him worried. Consequently, the chief demi-god Damraka was ordered to hold a mini-

drum by beating which he would be informing Shiva about the approach of the *Sandhya*, junction hours.

One day, while Lord Shiva was playing with Kartikeya as usual, Damraka, over-powered by inadvertent sleep missed to beat the drum to apprise the Lord as usual. Shaggy Shiva again missed the twilight hour. Later, in wrath, he cursed the chief demi-god to get fossilized there in the shape of a boulder for all times to come. After Shiva spelled the curse, he sat in meditation for long on that lofty mountain. Since then Damraka stands transformed into stone on the top of *Ratna-Shikhara* known as Bhairav Parvat.

T HE LEGEND OF THE PIGEONS

After Damraka, the mini-drummer, was cursed by Lord Shiva to get transformed into a stone. Parvati appointed two Ganas, attendants, so that they would be vigilant on each-other in apprising Lord Shiva of the twilight hours.

One day, when it was time for Lord Shiva to perform *Tandava*, dance, at dusk, these attendants, out of defiance, asked each other to accomplish the assignment of announcing the approaching hour to Shiva. This din of '*Kuru-Kuru*', 'you do it, you do it, rose to heights by their mutual rivalry. Thereupon, feeling incensed the great Lord hurled a curse upon attendants in these words, "Since you, out of defiance made '*Kuru-Kuru*' sound without any break, so you, O Ganas, have to stay here for all time to come, making this sound in the form of pigeons, also warding off obstacles at this hallowed spot."

With the curse, those attendants got transformed into pigeons, and continue to live at this place of sanctity, symbolizing the eradication of obstacles at this place of sanctity, symbolizing the eradication of obstacles at this spot.

THE LEGEND OF AMARAVATI

Once, the gods approached Lord Shiva with great devotion. They requested him to avert death in their case. The Lord was pleased with the devotional hymns sung in his praise. He took the crescent moon, adorning his head, in his hand and squeezed it. A peerless current flowed from the moon, taking the form of a stream, known as the sanctifying Amaravati. This was the most efficacious antidote against death.

Then, asking the gods to go to their abodes. Lord Shiva stayed in the cave along with his divine spouse Parvati, for meditation. Ganesh and Kartikeya also found themselves comfortable by their side.

THE LEGEND OF GARBHAGAR

One day gods while not seeing eye-to-eye with each other, vehemently approached Nandi, the door-keeper of Shiva, to grant them access to the Lord. Though Nandi prohibited them from doing so, they did not give up quarrelling and Nandi felt insulted. Approaching Lord Shiva, he reported that he had felt very much exercised by the threatening attitude of the gods. He beseeched the Lord to come to his succour.

The Lord, thereupon ordered a sanctuary to be raised all round Nandi, at once, with a single entrance, so that neither the gods nor the demons could muster courage to trespass. A big boulder was raised and carved to form a short-sized chamber. Nandi was asked to hold his staff erect and keep guard at the single door of the inner chamber of sanctuary. This was called Garbhagar.

THE LEGEND OF SODYA VOAN

Once a pious Brahmin Sodya voan, was running a shop in a village at the foot of Shankaracharya hill. Everyday some boys of the village came to him for a pinch of sugar, *Bataas*. One day one of the boys asked him for a second pinch, which he needed for another companion of whom he told that he was riding a bull. Curiosity in the shopkeeper was aroused when he heard that this new companion carried a trident in his hand. He gave the pinches of the sugar to the boy and asked him to guide him to that particular boy. Sodya voan was a devotee of Lord Shiva. Next day the boys got more sugar pinches than usual and they led the shopkeeper in the forest nearby. "Lo ! he is the boy who comes to play with us everyday", said one. But the man could not see him, whom he considered Shiva himself. Thereupon he entreated them to make him catch the tail of his bull. It was evening time. The devotee, catching hold of the tail, was dragged over the rough path, bush and rock. After going some distance he heard a voice telling him to go to Sheshram nag on the following Shivratri day, where he would be blessed with Shiva's *darshan*.

It is believed, that on the eve of the auspicious Shivratri, Sodya voan disposed of his belongings and went to Pahalgam. Thence he proceeded to Shesh nag accompanied by some villagers. At Shesh nag he saw the great Lord along with his consort waiting in a splendidly furnished boat near the bank of the lake. Sodya voan was greeted in the boat, which soon vanished from the sight. Kashmiri poets have sung the devotion of Sodya voan.

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Kashmir ---Militancy And Human Rights,

Human Rights Violations In Kashmir,

Human Rights In Jammu And Kashmir,

Kashmir---Greater Autonomy, Terrorism----And Human Rights Violations in Jammu and Kashmir,

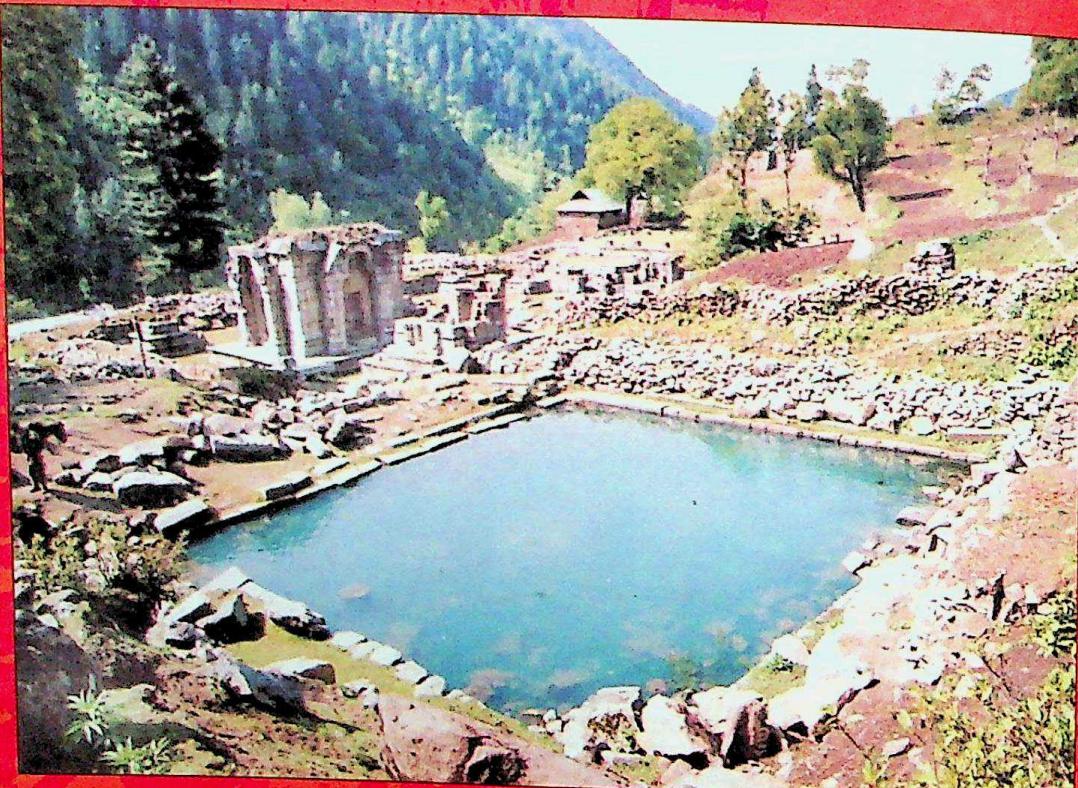
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